An epistell of the famous doctor Eraſm⁹ of Roterdame/vnto the reuerende father & excellent prince/ Chriſtofer byſchop of Baſyle/ cõcernyng the forbedynge of eatynge of fleſſhe / and lyke conſtitutyons of men. &c.

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To the moſt reuerende father and lorde/ lorde Chriſtopher biſ ſhop of Baſyle/ Eraſmus of Ro terdame wyſſheth helth.

I Can ſcaſe expreſſe with wor des moſt reuerēd prelate/ how yuel this trouble & wrāglyng ſtrife doth beye & greue my mynde/ nowe of late reyſed vp (I knowe nat by what perſones) in this noble cytie / which at my cōmyng hither I foūd very quiete & peſable. We rede how in ỹ olde tyme a ſtrange bore ſente in by Diana / brought gret trouble to the people of the countrey called Calydon/ but this beſyneſſe & trou ble (as I here ſay) was brought in to vs by an houſholde pigge. The thyng of it ſelf (I meany to ete fleſſh in lent) is nat dāpnable I dare wel ſay/ but yet that ſtubburn & diſobe dient mynde ſemeth to be redy & pre

payred to any maner of mischefe/if the truthe be so / as I am enformed by the cõmunication of many men

We rede in the histories of ỹ Grekes/ ỹ the rulers & heed officers dyd punysshe a certayn boy/whose play and pastyme was to pricke oute the eyes of byrdes/ wher so euer he mizt catch them/bicause that by this frowarde appetite & lust of it self to do a myssse / they gessed that he wolde pue a mischeuous citezin & a cruel/ redy to murder & kyll. We rede also that a certayn other man was merced ī a gret sõme of money/bycause whan the officer after the maner of the countrey asked of him/ whether he had a wyfe according to his owyn mynde/ & suche one as he wolde haue her to be: He answered bourdīgly/ye truely haue I/but by god nat according to thy mynde / & such one as thou woldest her to be. If one cõ

panyon

panion had made this answere to a nother in tyme of recreation/ it had ben a plesaunt & a mery iest / but by cause it was spoken out of season/ neither in mete place/ neither to person according: it dyd declare & vtter a leude mynde/ lytel regardynge or settyng by ỹ authorite of the cõmen offycer & ruler. Therfore deserued punysshmẽt/nat the sayeng it selfe/ but the circũstaunce & maner of the sayeng. Custome confermed with long vse/is a very mighty & strong thyng/ whiche though it be neuer so folysshe & vnresonable / yet after it hath ones takẽ place & hath caught authorite / vnneth it can be broken without great troublig of the cõmynaltie/neither cõmenly can it otherwyse be put downe / than by lytel & lytel after ỹ same maner as it crope in at the begynnyng. ❧ Nowe fastynge and choyse of meates are of

suche

ſuche nature/ that if a manne vſe
them right/they are helping to good
lyueng. Fyrſte ſoberneſſe & tempe-
raunce of meate / maketh ỹ mynde
more free & at lybertie/to gyue attē-
daunce to ſuche ſtudies whiche hel-
peth more nere to vertue & parfyte
lyueng. Moreouer as ỹ body was
a miniſter and a prouoker vnto the
myſdedes whan we dyd ſynne/ and
a felowe or ptaker of ỹ wicked ple-
ſure: ſo it is mete & accordyng that
in repentaunce he ſhulde be ptaker
of ſorowe & payne/ & be obediēt and
do ſeruyce vnto the ſoule/returnige
to the right waye agayne. Faſtyng
therfore and the choiſe of metes are
good for two purpoſes. Fyrſt to ta-
me the wantōnes of ỹ body that he
be nat wylde & ſturdy ayenſt ỹ ſpy-
rite: For as prouaudre is taken a-
waye from feers horſes & whiche be
diſobedient to the ryder/ & to them in
ſtede

stede of brede or otes is gyuen haye/ So it is very well done/ that norisshynge meate be withdrawen from the body/ which rebelleth agaynst ỹ spirite/ by the reason of abundaũce of iuce & ranke humours: & that su the kynde of metes be ministred vnto it/ wherof it shulde kicke & winch as lytel as were possyble against ỹ mynde: Whiche is as a horsman or ryder to the body: For as meate taken away from ỹ body mynisshethe the rankenesse therof/so are there certayne meates which so doth norysshe the body that he shal lyue but nat to ranke or wanton. Moreouer it is good & profytable to pease ỹ wrath of god/ prouoked with our synful dedes: For verily whan he seeth vs to punysshe our selues/ he than remytteth his vengeaunce. No payne is more nere aptaynyng to euery man than whan both ỹ mynde is vexed

with

with the hatered of synne cõmytted and the body also punysshed wt the abstynẽce of thynges plesaunt & delectable. And verely this way & meane to appease the wrath of god / is shewed to vs in very many places of the olde Testament: And Christ him selfe taught / that there is a certayne kynde of deuyls / which is nat caste out but by prayer & fastynge. And though it were shewed before of the prophetes also / that the festes of the newe Mone / the sabbot dayes the fastes / the choise of meates / & suche other shadowes of the olde lawe shulde vanysshe away whan ỹ light of the gospel began ones to shyne: yet for al that the churche of Christ beyng yet but yonge & newe begonnen / & al togider brethyng nothyng els but the newe Must of ỹ Euangelycal spirite / after that her spouse was taken vp ī to heuyn / embraced

nothyng

nothynge more nor sooner than fa-
styng & prayer. And thā euery man
fasted / and that dayly / though they
were nat cōpelled therto by any cō-
maundement or lawe. And ỹ most
parte of christen men nat onely for-
berynge flesshe / but also refraynyng
from the eatyng of fysshe / & al other
thynges whiche so euer bare lyfe / ly
ued content with frute / herbes / and
rotes: Whan Christ & his apostels
had gyuen leaue & lybertie to euery
man for to eate what so euer metes
he lysted / at laste whan the custome
of fastyng was ones receyued & ap
proued of the cōmen people / in that
no man grudged agaynst it / than
was it cōfyrmed fyrst by ỹ autho-
rite of other byssh●ppes / & anon af
ter by the authoritie of the pope or
byssh●ppe of Rome: Bycause than
(as I wene) the charite of ỹ people
waxing colde / the moste parte dyd

embrace & loue carnalyte & worldly pleasure. The auctorite & cõmaundemẽt therfore of the bisshops was added & put to / as a spore to pricke forward ỹ myndes of weke psons / whiche than were fallyng to worse thinges. Than was put to also ỹ cõstitution & lawe written to restrayn ouermoch lybertie / as it were wt certayne graces / and to kepe the people within their bondes / that they shuld nat ronne to farre at large / & gyue them selues to all maner synne and mischefe: Fastyng therfore & the abstynẽce from certayn kyndes of metes / can not vtterly be condẽpned of this cause that they do not profyte & helpe any thyng at al vnto good lyuyng / if they be vsed so as they ought to be. Moreouer an order is a great thyng / without the which ther can be no sure & stedfast peace & cõcorde among men. Concorde is norisshed

riſhed & mayntayned either by equa
lyte or els by any order/ that is to ſay
whan euery man hath his roume a
cordynge to his degree/ & euery one
hath his office aſſigned & gyuen vn
to him/ as (for an exãple in the bo=
dy of man) betwene the two hãdes
the eyes/ the feete/the eares/ there is
equalyte: but betwene the eyes and
the bely/ & the fete nat equalyte/but
order noriſſheth cõcorde/ which ones
taken away/ what good thing I be
ſeche you is left amõg chriſten men
whiche are (as Paule techeth) ỹ mẽ
bres of one body. Who ſo euer ther=
fore troubleth ỹ order ī a cõmẽ wel=
th/ bringeth in no lytel or ſmal incõ
modite thervnto/ namely if he do it
nat by occaſyon or neceſſyte/but by
a preſumptuous ſtubberneſſe & ſelf
mynde. Ye/ & though it be but in try
fels & ſuche thynges/ which of their
owne nature though they were diſ=

pyſed

pyſed/ it is no hurte or yuel at al.

As (for an enſāple) it is cuſtomably vſed in the churcħ/ that Alleluia is nat ſong in the lente/ yet to laude and praiſe god at what ſoeuer tyme or ſeaſon it be done/ is a vertuous & holy thyng/ and the churche in ſtede of allelupa hath apoīted other wordes/ almoſt of the ſame ſtrēgth and ſygnification. yet neuertheſſe/ if any curate ī diſpyte of the cōmen cuſtome wolde in his churche ſyng alleluia/ and mocke or ſcorne other ỹ dyd nat ſo to/ ſhulde he nat ſeme by the iugement of al men/ to cōmyt & do a thyng worthy of great punyſhment: Or if any curate in the laſter ende of lente/ nat by errour or myſtakynge/ but of ſette purpoſe & for the nones/ dyd cōmaunde in his churche the belles to be rong/ whan it is vſed of cuſtome to call the people togyder with wodden clappers: ſhulde

ſhulde he nat ſeme worthy to be ba-
nyſſhed as a madde man: Some
man wyl ſay/ what treſpas or faut
hath he made: In the thynge of it
ſelfe is no harm nor offẽce/ I graũt
but in the diſpiſyng of ỹ cõmen cu-
ſtome/ & in troublynge the order of
thynges/ is great hurte & offence. & ſo
mothe the more vnworthy of par-
don and forgyueneſſſe is the maly-
cious mynde of the treſpaſſer/ by-
cauſe he myght haue obſerued and
kepte the cõmen cuſtome without a
ny incõmoditie. Howe mothe more
is the ſame thing to be thought and
iuged in this mater: I meany of fa-
ſtynge/ whoſe enſample ſprange to
vs from the prophetes/ from Iohan
Baptiſt/ from Chriſt & his apoſtels
whiche hath ben cõmended to vs by
a longe vſage and cuſtome of oure
elders in tymes paſte. Whiche thing
alſo is of great ſtrength/ & chefely
helpeth

helpeth to apeaſe god whan he is of fended with oure myſdedes / and to prepayre the ſpirite to the worde of god/to holy prayers/to godly hymnes/ and to other vertuous & godly ſtudies & eyercyſes/mete for a trewe chriſten man. But if any thīg were receyued by vſe & cuſtom/ which for certayn cōſideratiōs or ſome incōuenīēce ẏ ſprong of it/ or for ſome better purpoſe/ were better to be putte down & layde away. It ſhuld be cōueniēt & acording/that it were done ſo by lytel & lytel/ that al wrāgling and ſtryfe myght be eycluded.

* Chriſt/ although he wolde ẏ the ſhadowes of the lawe of Moyſes ſhulde gyue place to the lyght of the goſpell / whan it ſhulde appere & be ſhewed. Yet leſt he ſhulde gyue occaſyon to any man for to be offended/ he leſte none at al of thoſe thynges vndone/ whiche the lawe cōmaūded to be

to be done. Neither taught he opēly at any tyme those ceremonyes to be dispysed/ whiche the iewes obserued more relygiously/than ỹ they coude suffre them to be condēned. No neyther condemned he vncurtesly those tryflyng tradicions whiche the Pharises of their owne inuētyon added to the burthayns of the lawe. ❧

This thyng onely he dyd rebuke/ that the pharises them selues kepte nat their owne constytutions/ wherwith they laded & ouerlayde the people/ & that through the supstition of them/ they brake the earnest & sadde preceptes of the lawe. Neyther dyde he so defēde his disciples that he said it was laufull for euery maner of cause to breke the sabbot day/ but he excuseth them by necessytie cōstraynynge them/ & defendeth their innocency by the ensample of Dauyd & the preestes/ though vpon ỹ sabbot day/

helpeth to apeaſe god whan he is of fended with our myſdedes / and to prepayre the ſpirite to the worde of god / to holy prayers / to godly hymnes / and to other vertuous & godly ſtudies & exercyſes / mete for a trewe chriſten man. But if any thīg were receyued by vſe & cuſtom / which for certayn cōſideratiōs as ſome inconuenience ỹ ſprong of it / or for ſome better purpoſe / were better to be putte downe & layde away. It ſhuld be cōuenīēt & acordīng / that it were done ſo by lytel & lytel / that al wrāgling and ſtryfe myght be excluded.

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to be

to be done. Neither taught he openly at any tyme those ceremonyes to be dispysed/ whiche the Iewes obserued more relygiously/than ỹ they coude suffre them to be condẽned. No neyther condemned he vncurteslyche those tryflyng traditions whiche the Pharises of their owne inuẽtyon added to the burthayns of the lawe. ❧

Thus thyng onely he dyd rebuke/ that the phariseis themselues kepte nat their owne constytutions/ wherwith they laded & ouerlayde the people/ & that through the superstition of them/ they brake the earnest & sadde preceptes of the lawe. Neyther dyde he so defẽde his disciples that he said it was lawfull for euery maner of cause to breke the sabbot day/ But he excuseth them by necessytie cõstraynynge them/ & defendeth their innocency by the ensample of Dauyd & the preestes/ thoughe vpon ỹ sabbot day/

christ condemned not the traditions of the pharisyes

day (hungre cõpellynge them) they gathered the eares of corne. Moreouer Paule him selfe / whiche moste feruẽtly & stysselye defendeth & maintayneth the lybertie of the gospel / among ỹ iewes was made as a iewe shaupnge of his heer of his heed / receyuyng a vowe on him selfe / obseruyng the ceremonyes belongyng to their sacrifyce / and purifyeng hym selfe with other in the temple. ❧ The same Paule / though he knewe that an ydole is nothyng / and that the flesshe offred to an ydole is nothyng more vnlawful of it selfe / thã other flesshe: yet had he leuer neuer to eate flesshe whyles he lyued / than to gyue occasyon to his weake brother for to be offended by the reason of his etyng. He had leuer for a season to apply him selfe to the superstytion of the iewes / whiche coulde nat be ouercomen / than by turnyng the

hertes

hertes and myndes of them whiche were weake agaynst hym / to haue hyndred the goyng forwarde of the gospel. He had leauer forbeare for euer the eatyng of flesshe/than that they whiche were weake & scrupulous in conscience/ shulde haue had any occasyon gyuen of him/to suspecte that he was consentyng to the wicked superstition of ydolatrers.

The same Paule wylleth also that a bonde seruaunt beynge a christen man/shulde be obedient to his lorde and maister/ though he were an infydele/ ye/and waywarde & dyuers to please. He wylleth also/ that the wyfe beynge a christen woman / be obedient to her husbãde / though he be a hethen man: He wylleth that christen men shusde content & please the offycers whiche were gentyls in all thynges/ whether they required tolle/trybute/ or honoure/ leste any

day (hungre cõpellynge them) they gathered the eares of corne. Moreouer Paule him selfe / whiche moste feruẽtly & stysselye defendeth & maintayneth the lybertie of the gospel / among Ꝯ iewes was made as a iewe shaunynge of his heer of his heed / receyuyng a vowe on him selfe / obseruyng the ceremonyes belongyng to their sacrifyce / and purifyeng hym selfe with other in the temple. ❧ The same Paule / though he knewe that an ydole is nothyng / and that the flesshe offred to an ydole is nothyng more vnclauful of it selfe / thã other flesshe: yet had he leuer neuer to eate flesshe whyles he lyued / than to gyue occasyon to his weake brother for to be offended by the reason of his etyng. He had leuer for a season to applye him selfe to the superstycion of the iewes / whiche coulde nat be ouercomen / than by turnyng the

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hertes and myndes of thay whiche were weake agaynst hym / to haue hyndred the goyng forwarde of the gospel. He had leauer forbeare forcuer the eatyng of flesshe / than that they whiche were weake & scrupulous in conscience / shulde haue had any occasyon gyuen of him / to suspecte that he was consentyng to the wicked superstition of ydolatrers.

Paules counsell for obedience

The same Paule wylleth also that a bonde seruaunt beynge a christen man / shulde be obedient to his lorde and maister / though he were an infydele / ye / and waywarde & dyuers to please. He wylleth also / that the wyfe beynge a christen woman / be obedient to her husbãde / though he be a hethen man: He wylleth that christen men shulde content & please the offycers whiche were gentyls in all thynges / whether they required tolle / trybute / or honoure / leste any

man myght haue had occasyon to be offended with the gospell/ whiche no doute they shulde haue had / if ỹ professyon of Christ shulde haue semed sedicious & cause of debate and stryfe. Paule knewe wel ynough/ what is the lybertie of the gospell/ but it was expedient for the forthe-raũce of the gospell that knowlege shulde be subdewed/ & gyue place to charitie. For these men also (I meane the eaters of flesshe in lente) as I here saye / layeth for theym selfe the lybertie of the gospel/ of the whiche they make Luther renewer & defender. In whom it semeth to me/ nat onely the trewe spirite of the gospel to be wantyng/ whiche is sobre/ mylde/ & endewed with discrete symplycite/ but also natural wysedom/ if they do nat fauour Luthers cause than they worke wysely/ but if they do fauer it / they coulde nat by any

other

other waye haue hurte or hyndred it more/ than by this. If their entente be/ that the christen people shulde be restored agayne to their olde lyberte than take they the wrong way to the wodde/ & done al amysse. For their vndiscrete presūption doth nothyng els/ but double the yoke & bondage/ cōpellyng the rulers & offycers to encrease the bondage with sharpe and strayte cōmaundementes & decrees. But these men whiche defendeth thē selues with the colour of the lyberte of the gospel/ ought fyrst to do such dedes/ for loue of ỹ which they myght be pdoned & holden excused/ if they dyd lytel regarde these thyngs/as be ynge smaller & of lesse value. Who so euer dothe al that he can to helpe his neighbour: Who so euer i so moche reuēgeth nat the iniuries & wrōges don vnto him/that he is redy to do a good turne for an yuel: Who so

euer

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than they worke wysely/ but if they
do fauer it/ they coulde nat by any

knowledge submitteth it self to charity.

other

other waye haue hurte or hyndred it more/ than by thes. If their entente be/ that the chriſten people ſhulde be reſtored agayne to their olde lyberte than take they the wrong way to the wodde/ & done al amyſſe. For their vndiſcrete preſũption doth nothyng els/ but double the yoke & bondage/ cõpellyng the rulers & offycers to encreaſe the bondage with ſharpe and ſtrayte cõmaundementes & decrees. But theſe men whiche defendeth thẽ ſelues with the colour of the lyberte of the goſpel/ ought fyrſt to do ſuch dedes/ for loue of ỹ which they myght be ꝓdoned & holden excuſed/ if they dyd lytel regarde theſe thyngs/ as beynge ſmaller & of leſſe value. Who ſo euer dothe al that he can to helpe his neighbour: Who ſo euer ſo moche reuẽgeth nat the iniuries & wrõges don vnto him/ that he is redy to do a good turne for any yuel: Who ſo

euer

euer is alwaye sobre/ as thoughe he fasted: Whose mynde/raymēt/ and cōmunycation sheweth nothing eles but sygnes of chastite: Who so euer is altogider busyed & occupied in doyng suche thinges/wherof it semeth that some great & cōmen welth and profyte shal folowe: such a man paraueture shalbe ꝑdoned / though he seme lesse superstitious in obseruyng the ceremonys which are more mete and according for the vnlerned and weake persons. But whose so euer hole lyfe serueth but vnto riote and voluptuousnesse: Whose cōmunication is proude/ feers/ and vnchast: Whose mynd; in so moch is nat mete & mylde/ that they be redy for the leest worde of reprefe in the worlde/ to lay on w^t their fistes/ or to thrust in with their dagger: suche felowes are shameles/if they preache of the lyberte of the gospel/ for asmoch as they

they are ſuch maner men/ ỹ they ought to be kepte vnder & holden ī yet/ with lawes & ceremonyes/as it were with grates of yron/ euyn lyke as ỹ iewes were/ vntyl they do profyte & growe vp to ỹ quickneſſe & ſtrēgth of the Euangelycal ſpirite. Wherfore euyn as ỹ preſūptuouſneſſe of theſe men, nat without cauſe diſpleſeth & miſlyketh al good & wyſe mē/ So are there certayn thīges/ in whiche the ſame men are ſorye to ſe the flocke of Cryſt ouermoch wrapped and entāgled with iudaical ceremonyes /& to be oppreſſed outher with the authorite/ or els through the negligence of ſome certayn prelates of the church. Of the which thyng ſaynt Auguſtyne alſo cōplayneth in his epyſtels/ cryeng out that the condytion & ſtate of the iewes were almoſt more eaſy & tollearble thā the cōdition of chriſten men. So moche

of iu-

euer is alwaye sobre/ as thoughe he
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syberte of the gospel/ for asmoch as
they

they are ſuch maner men/ þ they ought to be kepte vnder & holden ī yet/ with lawes & ceremonyes/as it were with grates of yron/ euyn lyke as þ iewes were/ vntyl they do proſpte & growe vp to þ quickneſſe & ſtrēgth of the Euangelycal ſpirite. Wherfore euyn as þ preſūptuouſneſſe of theſe men. nat without cauſe diſpleſeth & myſlyketh al good & wyſe mē/ So are there certayn thīges/ in whiche the ſame men are ſorye to ſe the flocke of Cryſt ouermoch wrapped and entāgled with iudaical ceremonyes/ & to be oppreſſed outher with the authorite/ or els through the negligence of ſome certayn prelates of the church. Of the which thyng ſaynt Auguſtyne alſo cōplayneth in his epyſtels/ cryeng out that the condytion & ſtate of the iewes were almoſt more eaſy & tollearble thā the cōdition of chriſten men. So moche of ius-

Augustines complaynt

the state of the Jewes better then the condition of christians

of iudaical supstitions euyn at that tyme was flowen so plentuously in to the cōmen vsage and custome of christen men. The people them selfe cōmenly sechen & drawen suche bō-dage vnto thē selues/euyn lykewise as the wynde Eolias drawyth clou-des vnto him selfe (as it is sayde in the cōmen prouerbe) But it were ȳ bysshopes parte & duetie to prouyde and se for the lyberte of their flocke/ whiche they haue taken & receyued of Christ & his apostels. * Nowe a dayes we do heape oftentymes bur then vpon burthen and tye snare to snare/ so lytel we go about to rydde out of bondage the soules of ȳ pro-ple/ & al to the entent to haue them more thral & in daūger to our tyrā-ny/seking rather and so folowyng our owne lucre & aduaūtage/ than the helth & sauegard of their soules

* Paule putteth no difference be-

twene

twene one day & another/but he cou
teth euery day for any holy day/ney-
ther iugeth he any worke vnlauful
to be done on the holy day/which is
done accordyng to the charite of the
gospel. After that our elders wyl-
led for a very resonable cause true-
ly/the sonday to be kept holyday/in
whiche the people shulde cõe togider
to here the gospell of god preached.

Anon after holydayes were com-
maũded to be kepte from al maner
bodily occupation & labour/ whan
other whiles it were a more holy thi
ge with handy labour/ to make pro
uispon for their wyues & childer/ be
yng in ieopdy to perysshe for hũgre
than to here the songes of ỹ preestes
in the churche/ which they vnderstã
de nat: I speke nat this by cause I
do iuge the accustomed of antems &
hymnes to be condẽpned/ wherwith
the quere gyueth prayse to their god

and

and ours: but lykewise as Christe doth teache in the gospel / that man was nat made bycause of ỹ sabbot day / but that contrariwyse / the sabbot daye was instytute & ordayned for mānes cause. So I do iuge / ỹ al ceremonyes ought to gyue place so oste / as the necessyte of our neighboure requyreth the offyce & dede of charite. But ỹ people / of whō they ought to lerne the truth of these thinges: of the same are cōpelled oftentymes to do ỹ cōtrary. And it was nat thought sufficient that the people afterwarde was ouercharged with holydayes / & dayly is charged more & more. For in some coūtreys it is ī maner a cōmen custome / that euery bysshop dothe adde one newe holy day to the olde / as a thynge to cause hym specially to be remēbred perpetually after his decesse: & that is done otherwhyles for very lyght

causes.

causes. Due there is paraduēture/ whiche ī tymes past hath had a wē= che to his derling/ whose name was Barbara/ for this cause he wil that saynt Barbaras day be holy day. Anothers mother was named Ka= therin/ & this hath semed to be cause suffycient wherfore saynt Katheris day shulde be holyday/ & kepe ỹ peo ple from their worke. Some others name is Wyllyam/ & therfore labou reth he al ỹ he can/ that saynt Wyl= lyam may haue his holiday by him selfe. Lette these thinges be reherſed bycause of exāple onely/ for I had leuer vse fayned exāples than to of fende any person. Some men also hath their priuate & peculyer affecty ons: one man towarde saynt Eras mus/ another towarde saynt Chri= stofer. Ther is also certayn cōmen affections of orders/ of natiōs/ and of cyties/ as ỹ blacke freers fauou=

reth excedigly their Dominyke/ the gray freers their frances: ỹ paynters saynt Luke/ surgions & phisycions Cosme and Damian/ shomakers/ Crispyne: Barryers saynt Martyn: frenchmen Claudius: parisyans Genouese: Dyforde men saynt Friswyde. Of this kynde is also ỹ affection of them/ which wyl haue Christ & the sayntes to be superstitiously honored by ptes/ to whom it is nat inough ỹ the dethe of Crist is so ofte repsented & dayly remembred in so many masses/ & that ỹ holy crosse hath his two holydayes/ excepte also the blode whiche Christe shedde forth/ the whiche they saye is kepte ī many places: excepte ỹ nayles/ ỹ crowne of thornes/ ye/ excepte the prepuce of Christ/ that is to wete (the skynne whiche was cutte from his preuy mēbres whan he was circūcised) whiche they worship ī some

place:

place: Excepte oure ladyes mysse/ which is shewed in many places/ haue eche one their proper holyday.
But if any of such maner thynges shalbe/ which shal seme that it may be wel & holyly honoured: It were ynough that holy day were solemly kepte in ỹ churches onely/ to which it myght be lauful for riche men to come/ or who so euer els myght conueniētly/ & let nat the poore men be cōpelled/ whose handes norisseth a great housholde. And though these affections parauēture are nat to be repreued/ yet ought nat the wysdom of the bysshops to sette so moche by them/ that forthwith euery sayut & euery relyke shulde haue his proper holyday/ his proper masse/ & proper seruyce/ & peculyare maner of worshippyng. What other thing is this than to dryue & cōpel the poore people to famysshing/ whan that thing

is ta-

is taken from them/ wherwith one-
lye they nourisshe their housholde or
meyny. ye/ moreouer as the worlde
goth nowe a dayes/ what other thig
is it els/ than to prouoke & cal ỹ peo
ple from honest & holy labours/ to
ydelnesse & ryote: For what dayes
do we synne more in excesse/ dronk-
nesse/ lechery/ at cardes/ dyce/ Eels/ &
suche vnlauful games: in chidyng
braulynge/ quarellyng/ fyghtynge/
and murder/ than on the holydays:
And of howe folysshe iugemēt and
clene out of order are we here in this
thyng: If any man on the holyday
be dronken from morne to nyght: if
he haue cleued to an hoore: if he ha-
ue vsed vnlaufull games / no man
putteth him to any busynes or trou
ble: if he haue sowed but a sho / he
is accused as an heretyke. I say nat
these thynges bycause I wolde that
the lay people shulde dispyse the ho-
lydays/

lydayes/ but bycause me thynketh/ that the shepdes of the church shuld do very wel/if they vtterly dyd put downe suche maner holydayes/ the sonday onely excepted / & a fewe other prīcipal dayes/ & if in the same which they leaue vnput downe/they dyd suffre ỹ pore people after masse and the preachyng/if nede required withtheir worke & labour to socour their chyldren & housholde seruaūtes / or els to gete somwhat besydes that/ to bestowe vpon poore folke. But nowe oftentymes/whan after an hole monthes rayne / fortuneth one fayre day : the husbāde man is cōpelled to suffre his corne which is felde or cutte downe/to lye & rote in the feldes/ which in that same fayre day he myght haue caryed in to his barne/ & that bycause of suche holy dayes / whiche were neuer made by the auctorite of the olde fathers/but

brought

brought in (to say no worse/ nor to go any nerer the truth) by ỹ carnall affectiõs of certayn men. These thinges at the fyrste begynnyng crepeth in by lytel & lytel/ vnder the coloure or apparaũce of honestie & vertue. Afterwardes they spring & flowen in more plentuously. At the laste/ whan they be ones cõfyrmed & strẽthed by vsage & custome/ they raign and occuppen tyranny/ so that than they can nat scarcely be layde downe or taken away / without great trouble & moch strife. Wherfore the byssshops ought nat to loke beside these thinges/ but dilygently & straitly to loke vpon them at their fyrst comig in/ for generally/ what so euer partayneth to the lawes of man/ are as remedies or salues vnto sycknesses or sores: & euyn so are they to be attẽpred & applyed to the present state of tymes & thynges. There be ma-

ny

ny thynges / whiche in olde tyme it was a good & godly thyng to inſty-tute & ordayn / which ſelfe ſame thin-ges afterwarde for ſome occaſyon ſpronge vp / & for the qualyte of ty-mes & of mens maners chaunged / to be abrogated & dyſanulled / were a more godly thyng : whiche thyng for al that ought nat to be done / by the raſſhe preſūption of the people / but by the authorite of the rulers / that al ſedition & ſtryfe might be a-uoyded / and the cōmen cuſtome ſo chaūged / that vnytie & cōcorde were nat broken / which thyng leſt it mizt happen / prouiſyon is to be made by the dilygēce of the byſſhops / whom it is nat mete any longer to ſtoppe their eares & to weye deffe / at ỹ iuſt and right ful cōplayntes of the peo-ple : Parauēture the ſame iugemēt is to be gyuen of ỹ wedlocke of pre-ſtes. ✠ In the olde tyme / as preſtes

were

were very fewe in nombre: so were they very holy in their lyuyng. The same that they might the more frely gyue attẽdaunce to holy exercises & pastymes/wyllyng without any cõpulsyon / kepte them selues chaste. And verily/ so great loue of chastite was among the fathers in ỹ olde tyme/that certayn of thẽ were lothe to suffre any chrysten man to mary a wyfe / if he had ben vnmaryed at the tyme of his baptyme: And moche more lothe were they to suffre any to mary the seconde wyfe. Than that thyng whiche semed cõmendable & alowable in bisshops & preestes was trãslated vnto the deacons / & at the last to subdeacons also. The custome wyllyngly receyued / was in conclusyon confyrmed and stablysshed by the authorite of the byssshoppes. In the meane tyme the nõbre of preestes encreased/ and the holy sy-

ly lyuyng of them decreased. Howe many swarmes of preestes are noryssshed in monasteries: howe many in colages: & besydes these there is an innumerable multytude of prestes euerywhere. And among so many/ howe gret scarcenesse is there of them which lyueth chastly: I speke of them whiche kepeth concubynes opēly at home in the stede of wyues for I do nat nowe touche nor medel with the mysteries of ỹ more secrete pleasures of the flesshe. I do speke of those thinges onely/ which be opēly knowen to ỹ cōmen people. And though we do knowe these thynges wel ynough/ yet are we in admyttinge & receyuyng them to holy orders very easy/ & in the releasynge of the cōstitution whiche forbyddeth preestes to haue wyues/ very harde and strayte/ whan Paule teacheth clene cōtrariwise/ that no man is swiftly

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to be promoted to holy orders / & in many places dilygently prescribeth and apoynteth what maner men p̄stes ought to be / what maner men deacons : but as cōcernyng kyueng sole without wyues / neither Christ / neyther the apostels haue apoynted or sette any lawe in holy scrypture / watchyng al the nyght long at the toumbes of martyrs / which was in the olde tyme receyued & vsed by the cōmen custom of christen men / and that certayne hūdred yeres dyd contynue / the churche hath putte downe many dayes ago. Fastyng wont to be prolōged & cōtynewed vntyl euentyde / the churche hath translated to noon. And many other thyngs for necessary causes rissen & sprong vp the churche hath chaūged. Why do we here cleue faste so obstynately to the cōstytution of man / namely seyng that so many causes doth requyre a chaūge

a chaūge. ffor fyrst a great parte of the preestes lyueth with yuel fame/ and with very vnquyete conscience entreate they & dealeth with the holy mysteries. ffurthermore/ a gret pte of the frute whiche shulde springe & ryse of thē perysshyth/ bycause their doctryne is dispysed of ỹ people/ for their open shameful lyueng. But if to them whiche can nat lyue chast lycence was graunted to mary wyues: both they shulde lyue more quietely/ & with authorite shulde preche the worde of god / the people regardyng their doctryn: & they shulde pupde dilygently that their chyldren were brought vp honestly / & in lernyng: neyther the one sorte of them shulde be shame & rebuke to ỹ other

I speke nat these thynges because I couete or entende to be a capitayn or a defender to those preestes / whiche nowe of late without the anthorite

rite of ỹ byſſhops/hath begon to be
maryed men hauyng wyues/but to
eyhorte the gouernours of ỹ church
and put them in remẽbraũce to cõſy
der & ponder wel/whether it be expe
dient that the olde conſtitution were
applyed to the pfyte of ỹ tyme that
now is. In ỹ mean ſeaſon I wolde
alſo that the byſſhops were put i re-
membraũce/ nat to receyue ſo raſſh
ly without probation / who ſo euer
wol come vnto the order of preeſtes
Lykewiſe I thinke that other are to
be warned/that they eyamyne their
owne ſelues dilygẽtly/ whether they
were able & mete to eyecute ỹ offyce
whiche they do take vpon them/and
that they take nat vpon them ſelues
the charge & burthen of ſo gret a p-
feſſion for cauſe of lucre/or becauſe
they wolde lyue ydely & in eaſe/ pur
chaſyng bothe dampnation to their
owne ſoules / & rebuke & ſhame / or
ſclaũder

sclaūder to the church. Moreouer/ who so euer are consecrated & made preestes al redy/although the bisshopes dyd open the way to matrymony / yet I wolde aduyse & coūsayle them/that they do nat touch thē selues sodainly & without aduysemēt with wedlocke/lest it might fortune them to be beyed with double repētaūce/that is/both of preesthod & of mariage. It is a great parte of chastite / a man to be wyllynge with al his herte & mynde to be chast. Ther is nothyng more to be wysshed & desyred/than that a preest without cōtraūce of matrimony/at lyberte/ & hole/ do serue his lorde god. But if whan al remedies hath ben assayde non can helpe/neither the rebellyon of the flesshe can be ouercome/ than it remayneth that he lyue chastely without woman / haupnge a wyfe for a remedy & nat for voluptuous

pleasure/

pleasure/ enforcyng him selfe in the
meane season to the vttermost of his
power/ to recõpence & make amen-
des for the infyrmite of the flesshe/
with other vertuous lyueng & holy
studies & workes/ for so shal al men
perceyue that a wyfe was sought for
necessyte/ & nat for voluptuousnes.

And I doute nat/ but ỹ the moste
parte of the byssshoppes parceyueth
right wel that these thynges ar euen
so as I do say: but I feare leste in
this thyng also/ lucre doth withstãd
and be a lettynge/ that we may nat
folowe that thynge whiche we do se
and parceyue to be best: If the byss-
shoppes wolde go about to chaũge
the cõstitution/ their offycers ī their
courtes parauẽture wolde grudge
and crye agaynst it/ whiche feleth
more profyte & auaũtage to growe
of preestes concubynes/ than wolde
growe of their wyues. But it is a-

gaynst

gaīst right & reason / ỹ lucre shulde bere so gret a swynge among ūs / ỹ for it we shuld nat iuge indyfferētly and make iust prouisyon for Christes ministers / in a mater of so gret weight & value. There are many other thynges of this kynde or sorte but let these two afore rehersed thynges / be putte for cause of exāple.

* Nowe I returne agayne to speke of fastyng / if any man be so strōge that he can mesure & tempre hym selfe by contynual sobrenesse: this man hath no great nede of fastyng cōmaūded / excepte for a season the wrath of god were to be peesed with such maner sacrifice. But you wyl say: certayn dayes of fastynge are apoynted & cōmaunded for the rude and vnlerned persons. I am wel cōtente / lette that be coūted tollerable. But they cōmaūde & apoynt onely one refection or meale in ỹ day / they

do

do assygne also what kynde of mea
tes we shal vse. Neither they thinke
this ynough/ but they thretten more
ouer euerlastyng dānation/ to who
so euer shal breake the custom bro-
ught in by men. For after such ma
ner & facion / certayn curates dothe
denoūce & cōmaūde the fastyng da-
yes to the people: I wote nat whe-
ther they do it accordyng to the myn
des & wylles of the byshops/ or els
no. Neither yet thynke they al this
sufficiēt/ but besyde this they drawe
and hale to punysshmēt/ as it were
one that had slayn his owyn father:
who so euer hath tasted of a pigges
flesh/in stede of fysh meate. I said
at the begynnīge/ that disobediēce &
sedicious presūption is worthy eue-
rywhere of great punysshmēt. Ney
ther do I pleade any such maner of
cause/or defende them which are be-
gynners of debate or stryfe: but yet
neuer

neuertheles/me semeth that this iu-
gement is nat onely vngetek/but al
so folysshe & out of order. Fyrst fa-
stynge was cõmaũded: this was the
chefe & prĩcipal poynt of the mater.
To eate suche & suche meates/ was
but an accessorie or secõdary thing/
Nowe they suppe euerywhere gene-
rally on ỹ fasting dayes/ & no man
is greued with it/neither maketh a-
ny gret mater therof: but if any mã
haue tasted any flesshe / euery man
cryeth out & wõdreth/as though he-
uen/ erthe/ & see/and al shulde go to
gider/sayeng/ the state of ỹ churche
is decayde & lyke to fal/heresyes en-
creaseth & ryseth a flote: To suppe
no man nedeth any pardon. Than
it may be laufull to eate flesshe or eg-
ges/ a pardon or dispensation must
be bought of the pope of Rome. ✕
So that thynge whiche draweth
more nere in lyknesse to the superfti

tion of the ceremonyes of the iewes lawe/ & which is altogyder such maner a thyng/that a man might worthely marueyle / that it hath ben so greatly receyued & vsed of vs christen men/whiche do defye & abhorre cyrcūcisyon / & other ceremonyes of the iewes (I meany choise of metes) We do greatly sette by/defendyng it stiffely with tothe & nayle. And fastyng/ whiche is a thyng more agreynge with the doctryne of Christ / & whiche helpeth more to the exercises of trewe vertue & holynesse, We suffre to be abolesshed & weare oute of vse: For albeit that prayer is the sacrifyce proply belōgynge to christen men: whose felowe & companion is fastyng/because these two/prayer & fastyng / bothe in the gospels & also in the epistels of ỹ apostels/ almost alway are coupled togyder (for by fastyng the mynde is pourged and

strengthed/that the prayer might be pure/feruēt/ & lusty) yet in ỹ choise of meates we holde faster the cōstytution of man / & more toughly do cleue vnto it/ than in fastyng: how be it the christen men are also charged & loden with more often fastes/ than euer were the iewes. ¶ Of the kyndes of meates/ Christ him selfe sayde: What so euer gothe in at the mouthe/ defyleth nat the man. And Paule nat disagreyng frō his maister/ sayth: that ỹ kyngdom of god is meate & drinke. But in the choise of meates / howe mochе more greuous & paynful is our burthen thā was the iewes: for vnto thē it was lauful to eate euery kynde of fysshe/ of al maner foure foted beestes / of al maner foules/the best & most holsomest. To vs it is forbydden to ete any maner felysshe at al/ for a great yte of the yere. And cōsyder I pray

you

you/ howe curious hath ben in this thynge / either the custome or els the authorite of our elders. At certayn tymes nothing is forbidden but only the eatyng of flesshe: somtyme it is lauful to eate bothe the oumbles and the fatte: at another tyme but only the fatte or brewes: at another tyme it is nat lauful to tast any pte either of foule or els of beest kyueng on the erthe. And here also ryseth very many questions / howe farre the signification of this worde flesshe/ doth stretch or reche: for there be certayne beestes belōgyng to ȳ see/ nat vnlyke to the beestes kyueng on the erthe: as Porpasses/seales/ dogges and certayn kyueth both on ȳ lande and ī the water/ somtyme in the one and somtyme in the other/ as castor an otter. Moreouer they dispute about cockes/snayles/& frogges/ whether they be flesshe or nat. Agayne

some

ſome dayes / it is ꝑmytted & vnlaw-
ful to eate egges / buttre / cheſe / myl-
ke: Another tyme / butter / mylke / &
cheſe / but nat egges. There be cer-
tayn dayes in whiche it is nat lau-
ful to touche any of theſe thinges at
al. There be ſome dayes alſo / in whi
che it is forbidden to eate what ſo e-
uer hath ones born lyfe: ſo ẏ nowe
it is a great doute / whether it be lau
ful to eate ſpōges / whiche (as Ari-
ſtotel iugeth) hath felyng / & be ſen-
ſyble creatures: & ther be ſome men
whiche byndeth them ſelues / to faſt
to breed & water onely. Though we
do graũt ẏ theſe thynges are nat to
be diſpyſed / yet who ſeeth nat / howe
colde thynges they are / & very try-
fels / if they be cōpared to the precep
tes of the goſpel / wherꝑpon we ou-
ght chefely & prīcipally to ſette oure
care & thought. Moreouer it is to
be cōſydred / whether to exactē theſe
thyn-

thinges of al men/so straitly & so ri
gorously dothe agree to the lybertie
of the gospel/ whiche Paule so fer
uently desendeth. * Nowe lette vs
se howe trewe it is euyn in this thin
ge also/ that whiche Paule sayth.

Bodily exercitation is profitable
but for lytel/ good lyueng or inwar
de holynesse is profytable to al thi
ges. No dayes hath the cokes more
busynesse & labour in the kechyns/
than on the fysshe dayes / neither at
any tyme is there more ordynaunce
or greatter coste made to fare wel.

So it is brought to passe that the
poore men be hūgry/ & the rich men
lyueth more delycately. * Who had
nat leauer eate Sturgion/ trout/or
lamprey: thā bacon hardened with
smoke/ or tough mutton? And a
mong these thynges also/which are
nat flesshe / there be many thynges
whiche are more norisshynge than

befe or mutton: as whelkes/coccles and other thynges many. ye/ & prouoketh & styreth more to lust of flesshely pleasure. And a mā may fynde certayn thinges that doth ȳ same euyn amōg herbes & frutes of trees also. What auayleth it to abstayne from mutton / if thou fyll thy bely with rocket/ dates/fygges/ & reysinges/mussheroes/artickechoughes/ & such other thynges/ which kyndleth the genitales more with wāton lust than hennes or pullettes: Sucket maketh the body more strong & lusty than befe dothe: & yet non of all these thynges is forbydden. By this meanes it is brought to passe/ that they whiche be poore & of smal substaūce/be greued & payned with suche cōstitutions whā they haue lefte nede: & the riche men through occasyon are called & prouoked to more pleasures & deyntie fare: Some mē

wyl

wyl ſaye. This is cauſed through our owȝ faute / I graũt: And therfore parauẽture ought ſuche thynges to be taken awaye / whan we perceyue more hurt thã good to growe of them. And it ſemeth nat very moche more frute to come of faſtynge / for they which be poore or weake of body / are ſore greued with long faſtyng. On ỹ otherſyde / they whiche be ſtronge & haue wherwith / vitayleth them ſelues & fylleth their bely with that / whiche were ſuffyciẽt for thre dayes / ſo that after dyner they are mete for nothynge but onely to ſlepe. And yet faſtynge is ordayned to be vſed for this cauſe moſt chefely / that the ſpirite ſhulde be the leſſe cõbred or hold dowȝ with ỹ weight or burden of the body. What nedeth it here to reherſe diuers diſeaſes and ſickneſſes / ỹ weakneſſe of olde men and ponge chyldren / pouertie / & the

cer-

certayn peculyar nature & complexion of bodies/ so that to some men the fastyng of a fewe houres is deth ye/ whan they be hole/ & to some all maner fysshe is as a Scorpion or a snake/ or any venomous beest is to other. Moreouer in such countreys where is gret scarcenesse or lacke of fysshe/ to forbydde ỹ eatyng of flesshe What other thyng is it/ than to commaũde the people to fampysshe themselues? In so great dyuersyte & inequalyte than of regions/ of bodies/ of cõplexions/ of ages/ it appereth euidẽtly ynough/ how many be greued with the lawe/ whiche (as they wene) is equale & indifferent to all men. There be some bodies whiche wyl be in good plyte/ ye/ & ranke & wanton though they were fedde wt hay. Agayne some there be/ whiche scarsly are kept a lyue/ though they be fedde with partriches & fesaũtes.

If the decre dyd cõmaunde that in
these faſtynge dayes / the riche men
ſhulde vſe tẽperaunce & meaſure in
their fare / & that whiche they with-
drawe frõ their owyn tables of their
wonte fare / to be ſent to poore folke
for their refreſſhynge : than ſhulde
there be made equalyte / & the cõſty-
tution ſhulde ſauoure ſomwhat of
Chriſtes goſpel. Nowe is that ful-
fylled and done euerywhere / whiche
Paule ſayd. One is hungry / & ano
ther is dronken or to ful. The chaũ
ge of meates is a pleaſure to ỹ riche
men / & a remedy agaynſt lothſom-
neſſe or gluttyng / neither at any ty-
me do they fare beter and fede more
dayntilye / than whan they abſtayn
from the eatynge of fleſſhe. But in
the meane ſeaſon the poore huſbãde
man gnawynge on a rawe paſnyp
rote or on a leke / for lacke of other
ſole or cates / catcth therwith blacke
breed

breed of the courſyſt ſorte that can or may be made. And in ſtede of the meth/ bragot/ or ypocras of ỹ riche men/ he drẽketh ſower whay or water of the podle/ hauyng moche a do in the meane ſeaſon to ſuſtayne his wyfe/ his chyldren/ & the reſydue of his houſholde meyny/ with cõtynuall ſwette & labour. Fynally the maners of men is come to that poynte nowe a dayes/ that theſe thiges greueth thẽ onely/ for whoſe cauſe they were nat ſo greatly inſtytuted & ordayned/ & doth nothyng apertayne to them/ for whoſe cauſe they were chefely ordayned. Sõe mã wyl ſay if any man be greued or ouer ſoore loden with theſe thynges/ there is remedy ynough wherby he may be eaſed. Howe I pray you: he may purchace a lycence to eate fleſſhe of the byſſhoppe of Rome. Thou ſpekeſt gayly wel. But neither al men haue lay-

ue leaysser to ronne to Rome / neyther al men haue plentie of money/ wherwith they might bye such pardons. And here agayne/it is comen to passe ỹ to riche men (whiche had most nede to be forbydden the etyng of flesshe / & whiche had moste nede to fast)the cõstitution is released almost al togider for money/ and the greuous poke & heuy burden kyeth onely on their neckes which ar poore and socourlesse. ¶ Moreouer I do marueyle greatly in the meane season at this/ that the authorite to release suche maner cõstitutions is reserued & keste onely to the Byshoppe of Rome/for so thynketh the cõmen people. Me semeth after my poore iugement/it were more conuenyent that authorite to dispence with men for such cõstitutions were gyuen to the curates (which ar succeded in to the roumes of the bisshops/as concernig

nyng payns and labours: for they may easely knowe ỹ state of euery man/ the plyte of ỹ body/ the riches or habilyte/ye/ & the very mynde also) Namely seyng these thinges doth nat so greatly helpe to trewe holynesse & vertuous lyueng. To them is cõmytted & betaken the dispensation & bestowynge of Christes gospel: to them is gyuen power to mynister the sacramẽtes of the church/ and authorite to here cõfessyons/ & to assoyle also from greuous synnes & enormyties: It is lauful for them/ye & they must nedes/ puttinge their lyues in ieopdy/be present and nere them whiche be sycke of the pestylence/or els any other fylthy/stinkyng/ & abhomynagle diseases. *

Why than is denyed to thẽ the authorite to gyue lycence to eate suche meates/ whiche the weakenesse & feblenesse of some persons requireth:

If the

If the curate be vnmete to dispence
these smal tryfles/ certainly than is
there great faute in the bysshoppes/
whiche hath cõmytted the flocke of
Christ to such maner persone. But
if the curate be a mete & able person
to whom the greatter & more weigh
ty thynges also might be cõmytted/
it must nedes be that here lyeth hyd
some secrete monster/ for whose cau
se these smaller and lyghter thinges
may nat be cõmytted to the same p/
sone also. But here agayne me thi-
keth/ Where the lucre & aduauntage
of certayne persons redy to grudge
and speke agaynst me: And wolde
god that this cãker were clene scou-
red out of Christes churche/ whiche
suffreth nothynge any where to be
pure/holy/ & vncorrupte/ for cãcred
couytousnesse is the causer that the
cõstitutyons ordayned as a mean &
an helpe to godly lyueng/ are now
wel-

welnere nothynge elſ/ but ſnares & grynnes mete to catche money with al. ¶ What auayleth it that ſo many ſharpe & ſtrayte lawes hath ben made of the election of biſſhops/abbottes / & other prelates & rulers of the church: yf nowe euerywhere for money gyuen/ the election is outher corrupted or elſ excluded. We rede that a tyrant of Sicilya called Dionyſyus / gaue many lawes to his ſubiectes/ & whan they were publiſſhed & cõmenly knowen/he wynked or loked beſyde the trãſgreſſours of them for the nonce/ vntyl at the laſt whan no man regarded them / neyther myſtruſted any thing/he had a great meyny in daũger of thẽ. So the lawes were to hĩ as nettes wher with he hunted for a pray. But god forbydde / that Chriſtes vycars for like purpoſe/outher ſhuld charge or lede ỹ people with newe cõſtytutiõs

or elſ

or eks abuse the decrees of ỹ olde fathers. Without doute/ nede there is of cõstitutyons made by them whiche are in authorite. And it chaũceth oftentymes/ that for certayn special causes/ it were expedient & profytable/ that the rigoure & straightnesse of the cõmen lawe were released/ so that it were nat don euerywhere/ neither for fylthy lucre of money/ neyther without discretion or iugement but for a great welth and profyte.

It shulde be greatly profytable & appertaynyng vnto ỹ purite of the doctryne & kyueng of the churche/ if no releasyng or dispensatyon of the lawe were to be solde/ & that power to dispẽce were cõmytted to thẽ/ whiche might knowe the qualyte & state of the person/ whiche shulde enioye the dispẽsation. Nowe to obtayne dispẽsation/ in a maner thou nedest nothyng ells/ but to shewe thy name

and

and pay thy money. If the cause be iuste & suffycient / why is money required? if the cause be nat rightful what helpeth the dispensatyon? * Moreouer in some thinges I might vse this reason parauenture / if the cause be resonable & laufull / what nede is there of a dispẽsation? if the cause be nat honest & ryztful / what auayleth any dispensation? * The pope cõmaũdeth fastynge / but (as I wene) his mynde & wyl is nat / ỹ ponge children / or very aged psons / sycke ly persons / or they whiche are diseased / shulde be boũde with this lawe / neither (to speke generally) any suche psons / whiche coulde nat faste without their excedynge great hurt. Here than / where is a certayn and euydent cause / no nede is to release the lawe / but to interprete it rather. In a doutful cause / whõ shuldest thou aske counsayle of / rather

than of thyne owne curate/ or ỹ or=
dinary bysshop: If thou refuseſt
his iugemẽt to whom thou art ẽno
wen/thou vttreſt & ſhewest thy cor=
rupte cõſcience. But if other hate=
red or ignorãce / or els any other thi
ge doth lette/ that he wyl nat graũt
the rightful diſpẽſation: lette than
the way be open to haue ſocour and
helpe of the archbysshop/or the bys=
shop of Rome. The proceſſe ſelfe of
oure diſputation moueth vs & put=
teth vs in remẽbraunce moſt vertu
ous father/ to cõſyder in fewe wor=
des/ howe ſtraitely ſuch cõſtitutiõs
dothe bynde vs/ whiche pertayneth
onely to mãnes lawe/of the whiche
ſorte no man wyl deny the popes de
crees to be/whiche cõcerneth faſtig/
choiſe of meates / and the wedlocke
and mariage of prieſtes/for of other
thynges I diſpute nat. ✠ There is
ſome man which refuſeth to ſocour
and

and helpe his father/beyng olde/ sicke & nedy/ with his riches or seruice whan he hath ynoughe wherof he might do it. The byssshop cõmaundeth him to socoure his father/ teachyng & declaryng that honoure in the cõmaũdement of god (whan he byddeth vs honour our father and mother) is vnderstande socour and helpe or relefe/ & nat puttyng of the cappe or gyueng place/or goige out of the waye. If this man refuse to obey/ it is no doute but that he maketh hym selfe in daũger of the fyre of helle. Agayne/ if any man be at debate with his neighboure/ & if he whiche hath offended or hurte the other hath repẽted/ desyring forgyuenesse & redy to make amẽdes for the iniury whiche he hath done: If he which is offended or hurte wolde refuse to obey the byssshop/ cõmaundyng him to remytte the vẽgeaunce

and

and to be at one agayne wᵗ his neighbour: It can nat be douted/ but that for this disobediēce he byndeth him selfe to ꝑ fyre of hell. Why so? Because this that the byssshop commaūdeth/ he cōmaūdeth it accordīg to the doctryne of the gospel/ & doth rather offre & put to him the cōmaūdement of Christ/than his owyn cōmaūdemēt. But whether the same thyng be done in these thīges/ whereof we nowe do speke: let vs cōsyder for what so euer I shal say I wyll speke it/nat as one assyrmyng/ but as one inquiryng & serchyng out ꝑ truthe afore ꝑ a byssshop/both most vertuous & euyn so most expellently lerned. This is of suretie/ that the most parte of these thynges whereof we do nowe speke/ came ī fyrst and were brought vp by custom. Nowe whom custome dothe bynde/and in what thīges/ & howe farforth/ whā

and

and howe longe: it were somwhat
to long here to discusse. ✻ Firste of
al/ this thynge me semeth might be
proued by reason/that a custom bi-
deth no man more straitly thā their
mynde & wyl was/ whiche were the
begynners & fyrst bringers vp of ỹ
custome/ let be excepted in ỹ meane
season ỹ hurtyng of other mens cō-
science/ & contempte or dispisynge.
Is it to be beleued/ that they whiche
fyrst of their owne free wylles/layd
downe their substaūce & ryches at ỹ
feete of the apostels / dyd it for that
purpose/that who so euer wold nat
do lykewise/shulde be boūde to euer
lastyng payne. Or that they whi-
che fyrst began to abstayn from the
eatyng of flesshe/ wolde be the begi
ners of this custome/with ỹ mynde
and wil/that who so euer afterwar
de wolde nat do the same/ shulde be
boūde to euerlastyng deth. Nay/ I
wene

wene rather ỹ ſuch was their mīde and ſuche their cōmunication / that if they had ſene any mā beyng weake & feble in body / whiche prouoked by their exāple / wold haue enforced to do the ſame: they wolde haue monyſſhed and coũſayled him by theſe wordes. Trewly beloued brother / I whiche haue a body rebellious to the ſpirite: nat without cauſe do chaſtice & punyſſhe my fleſſhe with faſtes: Thou haſt a body both weake & feble / & alſo obedyent ynough to the ſpirite / whoſe weakneſſe is to be cured / rather than wantōneſſe to be kepte vnder & punyſſhed. Wherfore prouyde & ſe for the helth of thy body / takyng ſuch meates meſurably, & with gyueng thākes to god / whiche are mete for the / that thy body may ỹ more luſtely & coragiouſly do ſeruyce to his ſpirite. After ſuche facyon doth Paule coũſayle his

welbe-

welbeloued Timothe/ that he shuld
vse a lytel wyne for the weaknesse
of his stomake/ & often sicknesses &
diseases. Nowe whether custome/
cõtrary to the wyl & myndes of thẽ
which haue ben the begynners of it
dothe bynde to any synne (lykewise
as whan any mã monysheth ano-
ther of his mysdede/ although he do
it nat for thentent that he whiche is
monyshed shulde synne more gre-
uously: yet he which monyshed of
his synne doth nat repent & amẽde/
synneth more greuously thã he dyd
before) it is nat mete tyme nowe to
discusse. This onely is to be consy
dred/ whether in these thynges whi-
che beyng of them selfe laufull/ are
made vnlauful onely by the cõsty-
tution of man: it was the mynde &
wyl of the byshops & popes/ whan
they dyd cõfyrme the custome recey-
ued & vsed/ that who so euer/ nat of
any

any malycious cõtempte / but thorough fayltie & neglygence dyd nat obserue & kepe the custom / shuld be bouñde to ỹ fyre of hel. god is nat so cruel or vẽgeable ỹ for euery lyght faute he wyl caste them in to helle / whom he hath redemed wt his own blode: He knoweth the weaknesse & fraylte of his creature / & he suffreth many thynges in vs / afore that he wyl cutte vs awaye from the body of his own sonne. But who so euer cõmytteth a deedly synne / of the mẽbre of Christ / is made the mẽbre of the deuyl: of the heyre of heuẽly lyfe is made ỹ heyre of euerlastyng fyre Seyng than that the byssshops are succeded in to the roume of him whi che secheth to haue al men saued / & to distroy no man: and if they bere fatherly affection towarde their flocke / cõsydring also that their selues are men fraple & weake / & in many

thyn/

thynges nedyng the mercy of god.
& howe is it lykely to be trewe that they were of this mynde/ that they wolde with their cõstitutions made by them/ whiche are nought els but men/ bynde their brethern & sonnes to euerlastyng payne: namely seing they may knowe euyn by their own myndes/that the myndes of men be prone & redy to synne. ye/ & oftentymes are wonte to be styred & prouoked to lust of synnyng/so moche the more bycause they are forbydden.

Temporal & laye princes whiche beareth a swerde by their office/and whiche with feare & punyssh̃etes by their professyon/holdeth the people backe from rõnyng to moche at large/ yet wolde they nat although they myght/ the lawes whiche they ordayn & make to be rigorous/ that the transgressour & breaker of them shulde forthwith lese his heed. And

yet can they kylle nothyng elſe/ but the body onely. And do the byſſhopes/ whoſe parte is to ſaue mē with the ſwerde of the worde of god/ for a lytel meate or drinke/ whiche Chriſt hath gyuen vs lyberte to take/ requyre that the beaker of their conſtitution ſhulde go bothe body & ſoule in to ỹ fyre of helle: namely ſeyng that it lyeth in their power/ nat to caſte on this bōde or ſnare/ nor to bring men in to this great paryl & ieopardy.

Moreouer ỹ bondes of the euangelical charite is gretter than ỹ bondes of kynred/ & the bondes of ỹ ſpirite/ than the bōdes of the fleſſhe/ & the bondes of god than of nature. But what carnal father was there euer ſo cruel agaynſt his ſonnes/ ỹ if he had forbydden them ỹ drīkyng of wyne/ leſt at any tyme ỹ drīking vnmeſurably might caſt them ſelues in to a feuer/ he wolde requyre/

that

that this his forbyddynge shulde be of so great strēgth/ that if they dyd nat obey it/ they shulde suffre dethe: namely seyng that they might drinke wyne safely ynough & without any hurte/ so they drinke it mesurably.

No doute of it/ he wolde forbeare and refrayne from gyueng any suche cōmaūdement/ if he knewe that his sonnes shulde be in daūger of so great paryl/ & he had leuer that they shulde fal in to some feuer/ than to ronne in to ieopdy of their lyfe. Beſydes this/ I do nat suppose ỹ there is any man but he wyl graūt/ that the lawes of god which he him selfe made & ordayned/ are more to be regarded & set by/ than ỹ lawes made by men: but nat al the lawes of the olde Testament gyuen of god/ dyd bynde in the olde tyme to deedly syn no certayn of them boūde nat to any synne at al (if we gyue credence

to fa-

to famous dyuines) of the whiche
sorte I suppose it was/ if any man
had touched carion of any best whi
che was nat slayne/ but dyed by the
owne accorde. And shal the bisshop
which is nat the authour & maker/
but ỳ stewarde & minister of a mo-
re gentyl Testament requyre this/
that al maner constitutions of his
makyng shulde bynde his subiectes
to the payne of euerlastynge fyre?

I wyl come to ỳ authorite of the
apostels/ whiche hath alwayes ben
so morche regarded & set by/ by ỳ cō-
sent of al christen people. I dare
nat be bolde to affyrme & say playn
ly/ that what so euer thyng they dyd
cōmaūde they cōmaūded it/ wt that
mynde & wyl that they wolde euery
transgressour therof/ to be boūde to
the fyre of helle. ✠ Paule in many
places forbyddeth couytousnesse/ le
chery/ wrathe/ cōtention/ & enuy by
name/

name/puttyng to these wordes. We knowe/ that they whiche doth suche thynges/ shal nat possesse the kyng dome of god. And yet the diuynes graũteth & confesseth nat euery ma ner wrathe to be deedly synne/ neyther parauẽture al maner of enuy.

Agayn the same Paule straitely cõmaũded/ that women shulde nat speke in the church or cõpany assembled/lest that seye somwhat proude and highe mynded/ might chalenge to them selues any authorite in the presence of their husbãdes. And yet I do nat thynke that he cõmaũded that/ beyng of his mynde & wyl/ ỹ if any woman through infyrmyte longyng to that seye/ had spoken any thyng in the cõgregation for desyre to lerne/ forthwith she shulde be made bonde to ỹ fyre of hell. I put forth these thiges so/ that yet neuertheles it may be free for euery man

to iuge

to iuge as he thynkes lyketh. Laste of al/ parauēture euyn in the commaundemētes of the gospel also/ a mā may fynde certayn which dothe nat forthwith bynde euery man to deedly synne. We se that ỹ fathers of ỹ orders of relygious men/ dothe openly wytnesse this of their cōstytutions (whiche for cōcorde & equalyte to be had in their couentes/ they nedefully do adde & put to ỹ cōmaūdemētes of ỹ gospēl) that they wyl nat any person to be bouūde by them nat so moche as to venyal synne. Wherfore by so moch the more I do marueyle greatly/ that there be certayn of that sorte whiche can suffre rather their brother eyther to dye/ or els to be vexed & tourmēted with a disease/ which is more greuous thā dethe/ than they wolde sycēce him to eate flesshe. I wyl nat here reherse that certayn dyuines & those of the

famous

famous sorte/ hath affyrmed playnly/that no mortal prelate can binde his subiecte by his precept to deedly synne/except that whiche he cõmaũdeth/ doth depẽde of the lawe of god which proposition or sayeng at this present tyme / I do neither approue neither disproue. This thyng onely I wyl aske & enquire: whyder al such maner cõstitutions doth binde to euerlastynge payne / or els but a certayn of them onely. If they al do bynde to euerlastyng payne/ thã is the yoke of christen men very heuy and greuous / seyng that there is so many cõstitutions of the bisshops/ but if certayn onely so doth bynde/ I wolde desyre to knowe / by what marke a man myght discerne those whiche doth bynde / from those whiche doth nat bynde. You wyl say/ they do bynde whan these termes ar put to: We cõmaũde & charge. &c.

But

But at Rome euery yere ſuche ma-
ner cõſtitutions are made & publy-
ſhed newe/that no ſpouſe ſhal gyue
to his ſpouſeſſe any token or gyfte/
aboue the valoure of. vii. ducates/
for let this be put forthe bicauſe of
exampſe. I demaũde nowe/ if any
man without any malyce or diſpite
of that cõſtitution dyd giue a token
or gyfte of. viii. ducates: dyde he
ſynne deedly? You wyl anſwer (as
I trowe) it ſemeth no. yet in theſe &
other more lyghter thynges alſo/ is
added alway beſyde greuous ſynne
the payne of excõmunycation ĩ the
dede doyng. And yet there be dyuy-
nes which ſayth/ that no man may
be excõmucate/ but onely for ſuche
a treſpas whiche is deedly ſynne a-
fore god. But this diſputation/ whi
ther the byſſhop or pope maye in al
maner thynges bynde their ſubiect
to deedly ſynne/ I wil paſſe ouer at
this

this tyme. ✠ This I wyl aske & de-
maũde/ whether it be probable and
lyke to be trewe / that the pope were
of suche a mynde/ that although he
myght he wolde after suche maner
charge & lode his subiectes. Paule
is angry & miscõtent that any man
iugeth his brother in meate or drike
and shal I for meate or drike thrust
downe my brother in to helle?

✠ Nowe what is the mynde of the
Byssshoppes and Popes in other
thynges / lette vs leaue that vn-
discussed at this tyme. Certayn-
lye in fastynge it is eupdente and
open/ ỹ their wyl was nat to bynde
al men by their precepte and decree.
Wherfore than/ do we beyng cruell
iuges against our neighbour/other
wise interprete the popes lawe/than
accordyng to his owne mynde. For
it is nothing lykely to be trewe/that
his mynde & wyl was to bynde any

many to fastyng or to etyng of fysshe whiche coulde nat do it / without the gret hynderaūce & appeyrīng of his helth / or els ieopdy of his lyfe. Therfore he byndeth no ponge chyldren / nat very aged men / nat them whiche be sicke / nat poore folke / and to make an ende / nat any other psons / which for some other cause can nat awaye with fastyng / & moche lesse he byndeth thē to abstayne from the eatyng of flesshe. ✠ These persons nowe rehersed / if they do eate / they seme to eate by the mynde & wyl of him which was maker of the lawe. You wyl say / but in the meane season yuel occasyon is gyuen to leudly disposed persones / whiche vnder this pretēce & colour wyl eate / whā they haue no nede or resonable cause. If this paryl & ieopardy wherof you do speke / were partaynynge to murder or to some other great yuel

or myf-

or mischefe/than wolde I holde wel with your sayeng. ¶ Nowe I suppose it myght better be suffred/that fyue hundred dyd eate flesshe without necessyte/ than that one person through suche superstition shulde be put in ieopdy of his lyfe. Wherfore I cõmende the maner and custome vsed in Italy/ where euyn in ỹ lent season is solde openly in the shambles (though of fewer than at other tymes) both veale/ kydde/ & lambe lest any thyng myght be wantynge to them whiche were sicke/or might yuel forbeare eatynge of flesshe. Neither any man there noteth or rebuketh the byer or eater / although he appereth nat by any outwarde tokens/ to be sycke or dyseased: for there be many causes which a man can nat parceyue by the cõtenaũce or face. And it belongeth to the charite of christen men to iuge the best/

what

what so euer may be done wel and
laufully/ dronkneſſe/ backbytyng/
fylthy cõmunycation/ & rebaudrie:
dothe verily declare & shewe a leude
perſon/ euyn accordynge to the rule
of the goſpel. For theſe thinges whi
che in very dede are yuell thynges/
whan they cometh from the mouth
declareth the fountayn of the herte
to be corrupte/ from whens ſuche
ſtynche is breathed forthe: And yet
with ſuch thynges we be but lyght-
ly offended or greued. ye otherwhy-
les we reioyce in them/ & cõmende &
alowe them. But he that doth eate
fleſſhe/ we do ſo deſye & abhorre/ as
though he were no longer a chriſten
man: Natwithſtandynge/ that the
goſpell dothe forbydde to iuge any
man in thoſe thynges/ which of thẽ
ſelues are nat yuel. ye & Pauke alſo
wylleth nat any mã to be iuged for
meate or drinke. Therfore who ſo
euer

euer eateth flesshe for a gret weighty cause/he synneth nat at al agaīst the lawe/ for as moche as he hath done nothyng cōtrary to the mynde of him whiche hath made the lawe. He that eateth without necessyte / if he do a mysse/ he trespasseth but only agaīnst the lawe of man. But he that cōdemneth his brother / he that backbyteth/ he that sclaūdreth & defameth his brother dothe synne and trespas/bothe agaynst the doctryne of the gospel/ & also agaynst ỹ precepte of the apostel Paule: And in my iugement doth more greuously synne/ than he shulde if he dyd eate flesshe hole. y. peres togyder. They cal them Lutherians and heretykes which doth eate flesshe. Nowe this is nat the eatyng of calues flesshe/ but it is the gnawyng & eatynge of thy brothers flesshe. * Whether of these two thiges I beseech you/is the more

more greuous offence & synn: And yet at that thyng whiche the authorite of ỹ gospel doth forbydde/ whiche Paule the apostel also doth forbydde/ no man is moued or greued/ at these thynges whiche cõtrary to the doctryne of ỹ gospel/ the custom of men hath brought in: We do so shyuer & quake/ as though the hole christian relygion shulde atones go to wrake for euer: But here in the meane season aryseth two difficulties or doutes/ of the whiche the one semeth to partayne to order/ ỹ other cõcernyng the hurtyng or offẽdyng of oure neighbours conscyence.
I graunt/ that an order is greatlye to be regarded/ in so moche that it were better to suffre euyn some tyrãny or crudelyte, than by troublyge the order to make a cõfusyon & a great styre in the worlde. * And Paule byddeth that mãnes cõpany

to be

to be eſchewed which dothe lyue inordinately/ troublyng the cōmen order. And the ſame/leſt we ſhulde gyue any man occaſyon to be offēded/ cōmaūdeth vs to abſtayne/nat onely from that thynge whiche is yuell in dede/ but alſo from al maner thinge whiche appereth to be yuel. But that an order may be had & eſtablyſſhed/ & by reaſon of order trāquilyte: It is expedyent that the heedes & rulers haue their auctorite ſure and ſtable/ & that the people obey them non otherwyſe/ than the vycars or deputies of god. I graunt al theſe thynges to be very trewe. And Peter the apoſtel cōdemneth them/ whiche folowyng their owyn ſenſuak appetites/ diſpyſeth the cōmen officers and rulers/ & ſuche as be ſet i highe authorite: & yet he ſpeketh there/ as farre as I parcepue/ of the heed officers & princes/ whiche were hethen

men

men & infydels. Howe moch more than ought the authoute of the byſſhops to be ſure & inuyolate/ which if they be good/ they are to be obeyd as the frendes of god: but if they be yuel/ & yet dothe teche thoſe thynges which be right & good: we ought to obey the doctryne whiche they teche. But if they be neither good nor yet doth teche good thynges / yet in my iugement they are ſō what to be ſuffred / leſt by troublyng the order of thynges/gretter incōuenyēce & miſchefe might ryſe. This counſayle wolde I gyue to the chriſten people. But if the weaknesſe of them ſhuld go ſo farforth/that it were intollerable bothe to god & man (which thig god forbydde euer to come to paſſe) Chriſt him ſelfe can make ſuch maner ſcourges & whippes/ wherwith he may dryue out of his temple/ſuche as he lyſte nat to be cōuerſaunt there.

there. For lykewise as nat without great cõsyderation & wysedome/the election of ỹ bisshops hath ben trãslated from the people to a fewe mẽ/ so I do nat holde with it/that ỹ olde examples shulde be renewed & brought vp agayn / wherby the cõmen multytude dyde expel & put downe their bisshops for euery litel cryme.

For we rede that Bruce for ỹ surmyse of fornycation & vnchaste lyuyng with his launder/ was deposed by ỹ cõmen voice & noyse of the people. But as Paule cõmaũdeth the wyues / that in al poyntes they shulde be obediẽt to their husbãdes/ and haue them in reuerẽce as their lordes: And agayn on the other pte counsayleth the husbãdes that they shulde mesurably & gẽtely vse their authorite towardes their wyues/ remẽbring that they are their felowes and matches in Christ/ & the cõheri

L tours

tours of the kyngdom of heuen / the one halfe of them ſelues / & that they ſhulde apply them ſelues to their infyrmite & weaknes / with diſcretion and iugement: So in lyke maner the hedes & rulers of the church are to be monyſſhed & counſayled / that they do nat either abuſe their authorite & power on the people / neyther turne the obediẽce of the ſymple people in to their owyn tyrãny. They ar ſheepe / but the ſhepe of Chriſt / rather than of the byſſhops: they ar ſhepe but for thoſe ſhepe that highеſt and heed ſhepherde hath ſhedde his precious blode: they are ſhepe / but ſo derely beloued of their lorde / ỹ whã one of them was gone a ſtraye / he with careful dilygẽce ſought for it / and at the laſt whan he had founde it / he brought it agayn to his feldes vpon his owne ſholders: They are ſheepe / but reſonable ſhepe / & in this

poynt

poynt egal & peeres to the byſſhops
ye/ ſõtyme alſo are more wyſe than
certayne of the byſſhops: & finally
of theſe ſhepe are made paſtours or
ſhepherdes. The people was nat or
dayned for cauſe of the biſſhoppes/
but the byſſhops were inſtytuted &
ordayned for cauſe of the people.
Wherfore albeit that the biſſhop cõ-
pared to eche one by him ſelfe of the
people is more excellent/ & (as Pau
le ſayth) is worthy of double honor
yet that nat withſtãdyng/the reſpect
and regarde of al the hole people to
gider/ought to be gretter thã of one
biſſhop: ye & if a man dyd adde this
alſo/ that the dignyte alſo of ỹ hole
multytude ought to be gretter/than
the dignyte of any one byſſhop/ his
ſayeng doth nat vtterly diſagre but
is ſõ what lyke to ỹ sayẽg of Chriſt
* Our lorde Jeſu aſketh this que
ſtion in the goſpel: Whether ſemeth
to be

to be gretter & more worshypful / he that serueth & wayteth at the table / or he that sytteth at ỹ table. Is nat he the gretter (sayth Christ) whiche sytteth at the table? But the people are those chyldren & sonnes of the spouse / whiche as honorable psons sytteth at the table or borde of ỹ gospel. The prelates of the churche be mynisters which stãdeth by / & walketh to & fro lokyng about / that nothing be wantyng to any of the gestes syttyng at that borde / and that whiche they parceyue to be most cõuenyent & mete for eche man / ỹ they bringe forthe out of the riche storehouse of the spouse / which is Christ If Christ / whiche without cõtrauersye or doute / is gretter than al cõparison / dyd cal him selfe a minister or seruaũt / & behaued him self as a seruaunt / euyn vnto the wasshyng of his apostels feete. What ought the

byf-

byſſhops to do / whiche accordynge to the mynde of ſaynt Hierome / are fathers / nat lordes / but myniſters / to whom the diſpenſation & minyſtration of the myſteries of god is cõmytted & betaken / nat the authorite whiche alſo may fal in to ſynne as wel as other men / & are ignorãt them ſelues in many thynges. Let the byſſhops therfore rule & gouern the people / but as a fader ruleth his children or ſonnes / & as the huſbãde ruleth his welbeloued ſpouſeſſe or wyfe. Neither let the byſſhop wene that it is lauful for him to do what ſoeuer him lyſt with his flocke / of ỹ whiche he ſhal gyue accõpte & recke nyng to the heed ſhepherde / & the very paſtor Chriſt. And let him remẽbre this thyng alſo / that his authorite is to be defended & maynteyned nat onely by ſharpe & ſtrait cõmaũdementes / by proude & ſtately coun

tynaũce /

tynaũce/ by manacyng or threttes/ and punyſſhmẽtes or vengeaunce/ (with the which thinges/ nat ſo moche as the very tyrantes are wonte ſuffycienly to mayntayne their authorite) but rather with purite & holyneſſe of lyueng/ with meknesſe/ with mykdoueſſe & gẽtilneſſe/ with holy doctryne/ with fatherly monicions with louyng & frendly exhortatiõs.

Pauke/in punyſſhyng him which had his fathers wyfe/ executed and ſhewed forth ỹ authorite of an apoſtel/ but howe oftentymes dothe the ſame Pauke humble him ſelfe/ ſpekyng fayre/prayeng/ beſechyng/ exhortyng/reqryng in goddes behalfe Cõtynual purite & clẽneſſe of lyfe/ is a certayn thyng worthy to be honoured & had in reuerẽce. An Euãgelycal mynde/diſpiſyng riches/ diſpiſyng honours/ diſpiſyng pleaſures/ deſyrous to do good to al men/

redy

redy to put euen his life ī ieopdy for the sauegarde of ỹ flocke cōmytted vnto him/ wineth the fauour of the people/ more than a man wolde beleue. ✠ A mynde replenysshed with knowlege of holy scripture/ a tonge no lesse holy than eloquent/ vttering and brīgyng forthe of the riche store house of Christ/ bothe olde thynges and newe/ maketh ỹ people to loke vp/ & purchaseth to hym selfe great reuerence & worshipe. By these thynges chefely the authorite of the byssshops is both goten & defended/ moche better & more safely/ thā by these wordes: We ordayne/ we decre & determyne/ we charge/ we cōmaunde/ we wol/ & suche other. Such thynges as I reherfed her afore/ causeth that the people wyllyngly of their owin accorde doth a great dele more than is required of them/ & that they be more styred with fatherly exhor-

tation/

tation/than with any manacyng or threttes/be they neuer so lordly/sharpe/& cruel. Do we nat se/ as oft as any man springeth vp/cõmẽded w^t any maner oppynion of holynesse/ & whiche appereth to be a trewe preacher of the gospel: howe greatly the people doth fauer hym with al their hertis/ how desyrous they are to here him/ how they marke & regarde his wordes/ howe al their mynde is holly gyuen & sette to gyue hede to that whiche cometh from his mouth: If they dyd se & parcepue a very fatherly mynde/ suche as Paule or Peter had/what thyng wolde nat the people do: The disciples receyued Paule non otherwyse/than if he had ben Christ him selfe/beyng redy euen to plucke out their owne eyes/ & to haue gyuen them to him/if he had desyred it. By this meanes shal ỹ order best be mayntayned & defẽded/ and

their

their authorite be made fyrme & stable/ and peace & concorde stedfastly cõtynue: if both partes stryue & labour eche to ouercõe other with benefaytes/ & doyng their dewty to other / for els it is but a tyrannycal peace / whan ỹ people oppẽssed with violence/resteth & are quiete in their bodies/but in their mide doth grudge agaynst their superiours/ & curseth & wyssheth yuel vnto thẽ. Neither let any man crye out/the authorite of the prelates & byssshops forth with to be mynissshed / if prouysyon be made for the lyberte & quietnesse of the people. Fyrst this thyng belõgeth to the maynutenaũce of the byssshops authorite / that the people do iuge wel & haue good opynion of them. But that man semeth to haue lytel good opinyon of them/ whiche iugeth them to be of that mynde that they wolde their subiectes to be

wrapped & intangled with very ma
ny snares & grynnes of cõstitutiõs
so that they myght rule after their
owne pleasure. ¶ That man onely
hath good opinyon of the byssshop/
which iugeth him selfe to be of that
mynde that he coueteth very fayne/
his flocke to be as free as myght be
in Christ/ & at lyberte from cõbrau
ce & entãglyng of scrupulusnesse &
gyleful snares. For that man doth
nothyng derogate or mynisshe of ỹ
kynges authorite/ which wolde nat
that he might do any thing cõtrary
to ryght & good cõsciẽce/ cõtrary to
the cõmen lawes/ contrary to ỹ cu-
stomes & priuileges of the cytezins/
contrary to the othe whiche he made
at his coronation. Nay/ rather he
taketh away ỹ hole authorite of the
kyng/ whiche iugeth that of ỹ kyng
whiche is more mete to be thought
and iuged of tyrãtes/ than of a lau
ful

ful prince. Wherfore if the kyng do nat require or loke/ ỹ any mā shuld be bounde by his cōmaūdement or statute to any payne/either of payeing money/or els of suffryng in his body/excepte his statute be rightful and accordyng to equite/resonable/ and made after dewe forme & maner/ & approued by the cōsent of the people/ & finally dothe nat requyre/ that euery maner cōstitution shulde make them boūde to ieopdy of their lyues: dothe nat that may seme to iuge the bysshop to be a very tyrāt/ whiche iugeth him to be of ỹ mynde that he wolde his subiectꝫ to be boūde with al maner cōstitutiōs of his makyng to ỹ fyre of helle: But the lawes of tēporal & laye princes: are oftētymes ful of manacyng & thretnyng/ & with a payne sō what sharpe & cruel doth feare mē rather than punysshe thē, What maner a lawe/

that

that lawe of the. vii. tables is sayd to haue ben / whiche commaunded that the body of that man shulde be cutte in sonder / whiche was in dette to many men / & nat able to paye & satisfye them. And those poetes and wyse men of ỹ olde tyme / feared the vnlerned multitude & nat able to be handled & ruled with the reasons of philosophy / away from yuel doyng with the lyghtnyng of Iupiter / taskyng vengeaũce vpon malefacters / with the faynynges of ỹ furies / the punysshers of great synnes / of Radamãthus iuge in helle / & of other terrible & dredeful paynes & turmẽtes / whiche the soules of yuel men shulde suffre there after this lyfe.

¶ Though we do graũt to ỹ laye prices somwhat of such maner faynyng / yet I do nat thynke that it is to be receyued in the byssh̃ops / whiche professeth the doctryn of ỹ truth

of the

of the gospel. But who so euer cō-
maūdeth or maketh a lawe/ casteth
on an halter or snare to bynde men
but who so euer exhorteth/ dothe so
cal men to the better thynges/ that
he do nat take frō them their liberte

* Parauēture some man wyl say
an exhortation is to weake a thyng
and of to smal strength: it is nede-
ful to cōmaūde & make lawes/ for
the sturdy & vnruly persons. Me se
meth the cōtrary. Oftētymes/more
is obtayned & gotten with fatherly
exhortation/ than with tyrānycal &
cruel exaction. Let this be counted
a lye/ if we do nat fynde it trewe by
dayly experiēce in our wyues & chil
dren/ & except Hierobam to his gret
hurte & myschefe hath taught it to
be trewe/ whiche had yuel chaunce &
lucke/ of folowyng the cruel & thret
nyng counsayle of his ponge cōpa-
nyōs. If the people shal se one whi

che is

che is a very preest or bisshop i dede his exhortation shalbe of efficacy & strength. But if open wicked lyuig corrupt & vnclene maners/grose ignorãce/insaciable couetusnes/ barbarical crudelyte/shal haue brouzt hym vtterly out of fauour with the people: What shal it auayle or prosyte to cõmaũde & to make cõstitutions? They whiche wyl nat obey/ shal synne more greuously for cause of their cõtumacy & stubbernesse and they whiche shal obey onely for feare/shal deserue nothyng at al/ or eks very lytel/ for asmoch as no mã fulfylleth the precepte/ which fulfylleth it/ beyng cõpelled therunto by violence. ye/ & parauẽture his ypocrisy doubleth the offence: It lyeth than most of al in our owne selues that oure exhortation be it neuer so gentyl & louyng/ may be of authorite & regarded amonge the people.

Ther-

Therfore they do very wel / whiche
pronydeth that the authorite of the
prelates may be saued / but they pro
vyde very yuel for it / which wyl ha
ue it to be saued & mayntayned hole
non otherwise / thā wt threttes & fea
re. But in ỹ meane season it is rizt
and accordyng / that some prouision
be made to saue the lyberte of ỹ flo-
cke / as moche as equite requireth / for
it also hath a certayne authorite be-
longyng to it selfe / & that no small
or lyght authorite. Doth nat custōe
minisshe & disanul a lawe / in so mo
che that a lawe is nat worthy to be
called a lawe / except it be approued
by the consente of the people whiche
grudgeth nat to vse it: What thing
hath disanulled & made of no stren-
gth / so many cōstitutions made in
the last coūsayle / called Consilium
lateranēs / which began vnder pope
Iuly the seconde / & was fynisshed &
ended

ended vnder pope Leo the tenth. *

* Was it nat the custome & vsage of the people/ which were neuer mi-ded to obey the cõstitutiõs & decrees whiche were made in that coũsayle. Doutlesse such is ỹ voice of the peo ple/ whiche same also is called ỹ voi ce of god/ such is the authorite of the fre multytude: a regarde & respecte of the which is mete to be had/ as of tentymes as it goth nat a wry from the rule of vertue & holynesse. Wher fore he shal gyue good counsayle/ who so euer wyl so moderate & or-der his coũsaile/ that both partes be prouyded for indifferẽtly. * Nowe as cõcernyng the offendyng of our neighbours cõscience/ howe moche it is to be regarded/ let vs consyder in fewe wordes. ☞ Our capitayn and maister Jesu Christ/ somtyme regardeth ỹ offendyng of other mẽ/ and applyed him selfe to auoyde the same.

ſame. Agayn at another tyme he re
garded it nat/ that ỹ phariſeis were
offended. He wolde be born of a ma
ried woman/ he was circumciſed/ he
obſerued the ceremonyes apoynted
and cõmaunded in the lawe/ he dyd
faſte/ leſt any thyng might haue be
layde agaynſt hym/ wherin it myght
appere of lyghtyhode that he had don
wickedly/ or cõtrary to iuſtice. But
he dyd nat ceſſe to preche his father/
he dyd nat ceſſe to teche the heuenly
philoſophy/ he ceſſed nat to do good
to al mẽ/ he feared nat to heale men
on the ſabbot day/ though the phari
ſeis were greued with theſe thinges/
he gaue occaſyon to Herode alſo to
be offended/ to whom he wold make
non anſwere/ & therfore Herode diſ=
piſed him. And in a certayne place/
whan he was warned & tolde/ that
the phariſeis were offended: What
anſwere made he? Let them alone

(ſaith he) they are blynde gydes of the blynde. Accordyng to his enſãple/the apoſtels alſo in many thynges applyed them ſelues to the infirmyte & weakneſſe of the iewes/ leſte any thynge myght haue hyndred or letted the courſe & goynge forwarde of the goſpel. But yet dyd they nat in al thynges/ nor at al tymes auoyde the offendyng of al men/ for the iewes coulde nat with any cryenge out of them/cauſe them to cõpel the gentyls to be circũciſed. This thing onely they dyd for a ſeaſon/hauing reſpecte to the inuyncible ptynacy & frowardneſſe of the iewes/ ỹ they cõmaũded the gentyles to abſtayne from fornycation/ from the blode/ and from the beeſt which was ſuffocated/ & from the fleſſhe which was offred in ſacrifyce to ydols. Paule dyd ſhaue of the heer of his heed/ he vſed the maner & ceremonys of the

iewes/

iewes/ in the feestes called the Nudi pedales: he dyd purifye him selfe among other in the temple/to thẽtent that he mought mytigate & pacifye the myndes of certayn persons/ whiche were redy to haue reysed vp sedition & strife. But although he dyd these thynges / yet where so euer he mought cõuenyently he spake agaynst them / he confesseth & knowlegeth/that it is laufull to eate al maner meates / but a chaũce falleth other whyles / that it is nat eyppedient to vse this lyberte. He offreth to vs the lyberte of the gospel/ but charite whiche measureth althynges by the profyte of the neighbour/otherwhiles wyllyngly forgoth of her ryght and lyberte/ but nat vtterly in euery thyng/neither cõtynually & at al tymes/but in the meane season striueth to her power agaynst the infyrmite & weakneſſe of them which vn

discretely

discrete are offended without cause/ and for thynges of smal value/ vntyl that they also do profyte & grow vp to suche strength of spirite/ that they be no lōger offended with those thinges/ which of their owyn nature are neither good nor yuel. * Paule as concernynge the vse of meates/ otherwhyles among the iewes was made as a iewe/ to thende ỹ he myght wynne the iewes to Christ. Agayne among the gētyles he became a gentyle/ to wyn them also. But it shuld be an vnsemely thing & against reason/ if any man nowe a dayes also wolde lykewise amōg the iewes become a iewe/ abstaynyng from the meates whiche are forbydden & nat lauful to be eaten among them/ lest he myght ronne in to the hatered of the iewes. Ye moreouer Paule rebuketh Peter/ bycause that (whan the doctryne of Christ was so publyssh-

shed

shed and sprede abrode/ that it was mete & accordynge for the iewes beyng taught & monisshed to haue forsaken & caste away their superstitious weaknesse) yet he, lest he shuld haue offended the iewes/ dyde withdrawe him selfe from the company of the gentyles/ and wolde nat eate with them/ and so auoydyng to offende the iewes/ he fell in to a more greuous offendyng of the gentyles.

That tyme was/ as a man wolde say/ the infancy and fyrst age of the gospel. And the relygion of ȳ lawe which they had lerned and receyued of their forefathers/ & whiche also was confyrmed by long vsage and custom/ was so faste grounded and roted inwardly in ȳ myndes of the iewes/ that this affection for a season was to be pardoned & to be suffred in them/ for as moche as it dyd springe and ryse of an honest cause

and

and coulde nat ſodainly be agayne plucked out of the myndes of men.

Moreouer of this offendyng great ieopardy ſhulde haue folowed. ⁂

⁂ The nation of the iewes which toughly cleued to the cuſtome vſed of their forefathers/ was tourned to the hatered of the goſpel. The gentyles ſo hated and abhorred the burthayn of Moyſes lawe/ that many of them coulde fynde in their hertes rather to haue renoũced Chriſte agayne/ than to receyue the ceremonyes & lawe of ỹ iewes. And whan nothyng is more abhomynable thã idolatry/ yet he that dyd eate of the fleſſhe whiche was offred in ſacryfyce to an idole at that tyme/ gaue a lykely occaſyon to be ſuſpected / as though he dyd fauour and agree to the ſupſtition of them/ with whom he dyd eate. And yet cryeth Paule/ euen in this alſo/ ỹ lawe to be abrogated

gated and of no ſtrength: He cryeth that an ydole is nothynge/ that the fleſſhe offred to an idole is nothyng els but as other fleſſhe is: he rebu-keth that man/ who ſo euer wyttig-ly offendeth his brother with his ea-tyng. But agayne he chydeth hym/ whiche iugeth another mānes con-ſcience/ in meate or drinke/ & whiche ſpeketh yuel of his brother for the meate ſake/ for the which he gyueth thankes to the goodneſſe & lybera-lyte of the lorde/ which hath created and made al thynges/ to the behoue and vſe of men. He ſcorneth the fo-lyſſhe wyſedom of them/ whiche as though they had taught a certayne great thyng/ dyd ſaye. Touch nat/ taſte nat/ handyl nat/ as the ſuper-ſtitious chopſe of meates which the iewes vſed by the cōſayle & autho-rite of Paule hath begon to be diſpi ſed/ after that ỹ goſpel is nowe ſuf-

fyci-

fyciently publyſſhed & openly knowen. So of lykelyhode it ſemeth/ ỹ the meate offred to an ydole is to be diſpyſed/ ſeyng that it is nowe ſufficiently knowen that chriſten men may with pure and clene conſcyẽce eate al maner of meates/ accordyng to the neceſſyte of the body/ gyueng thankes to him whiche hath ordayned and prouyded al thynges ỹ are in this worlde for his worſhippers. Whan he him ſelfe is lorde of althinges/ and whiche wolde nothyng to be impure or vnclene to thoſe perſones/ whiche be pure and clene. ✠

Wherfore to conclude/ ſeyng that the lauful cauſe to be offended/ ceſſeth: Seyng alſo that the kyngdom of god is neither meate ne drinke/ & ſeyng that the abſtaynyng from certayne meates prouoketh the moſte parte of ryche men to ſuperfluyte & delycate fare/ & dothe cruelly greue

and

and payn the poore men. It is to be conſydred and loked on/ whether we ought to ſtrpue ſo greatly as we do for ſuche maner conſtitutions.

* In that tyme wherof we ſpake before/ the apoſtels for a ſeaſon dyd that thing which they thought moſt eppedient for the fortheraūce of the goſpel/ which than was ponge and newe begon. Somwhat they applyed them ſelues to the affectiōs of men/ remaynynge of the maner of lyueng whiche they had vſed afore tyme. And that they ſo dyd/ it was but for a ſeaſon/ of charite and nat of right or neceſſyte/ and they dyde nat ſo in al thinges nor at al tymes neither yet without ſpekyng agaīſt ſuche infyrmitie/ as we haue ſayde before. But nowe a dayes/ how fortuneth it that occaſyon to be offēded is takenne of ſuche thynges/ the vſe wherof is nat forbydden by the goſ

fycientlỹ publyſſhed & openly knowen. So of lykelyhode it ſemeth/ ỹ the meate offred to an ydole is to be diſpyſed/ ſeyng that it is nowe ſufficientlỹ knowen that chriſten men may with pure and clene conſcyẽce eate al maner of meates/ accordyng to the neceſſyte of the body/ gyueng thankes to him whiche hath ordayned and prouyded al thynges ỹ are in this worlde for his worſhippers. Whan he him ſelfe is lorde of althinges/ and whiche wolde nothyng to be impure or vnclene to thoſe perſones/ whiche be pure and clene. ✠

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and

and payn the poore men. It is to be consydred and loked on / whether we ought to stryue so greatly as we do for suche maner constitutions.

In that tyme wherof we spake before / the apostels for a season dyd that thing which they thought most expedient for the fortherauce of the gospel / which than was ponge and newe begon. Somwhat they applyed them selues to the affectiõs of men / remaynynge of the maner of lyueng whiche they had vsed afore tyme. And that they so dyd / it was but for a season / of charite and nat of right or necessyte / and they dyde nat so in al thinges nor at al tymes neither yet without spekyng agaīst suche infyrmitie / as we haue sayde before. But nowe a dayes / how fortuneth it that occasyon to be offēded is takenne of suche thynges / the vse wherof is nat forbydden by the gos

pek/but rather ȳ forbidders of them
are condempned by the writynge of
Paule the apostel. Forbyddynge
(sayth he) the meates/ whiche god
hath created to be eaten/ and forbyd
dynge to mary or wedde. Finally
how we farforth semeth the greuynge
or offendinge of our neighbour to be
auoyded: Paule dyd forbeare and
abstayne from ȳ flesshe which was
offred to an idole/ but nat except he
had ben warned afore/ that it was
sacrifyced to ydoles. But the same
Paule dyde eate al maner meates/
askyng no question/ for hurtyng a-
nother mannes conscience. And yet
in this thynge wherof we do nowe
speke/ the offendyng of other mēnes
conscięces myght be auoyded/ with-
out any great grefe or incōmodite:
for he that for a season dyd refrayn
from flesshe offred to an ydole/ had
other flesshe at hande which he mizt
eate.

eate. If any man dyd abstayne frō bulles flesshe whiche was offred to Neptunus / he myght eate partrych or capon / whiche was nat offred to any false god: and yet dyd they nat so moche as abstayne from flesshe which was offred to idoles / but onely whan they sawe occasion. Some man abstayned from swynes flesshe and dyd eate a plouer. But nowe a dayes whan for ỹ most parte of the hole yere / the eatynge of al maner flesshe is forbydden: thynkest thou it right or reason / that I for ỹ weakenesse and superstityousnesse of this man or that / shulde stande in ieopdy of my helth and of my lyfe / seing that by this tyme / all christen men ought to haue ben taught / that they shulde nat iuge their neyghbour by suche maner thynges. But if it seme to vs / that christen charite so moche ought to apply it selfe to ỹ weakenesse

nesse of vnlerned or superstytyous persones / that to auoyde the offendyng of them / we wolde haue hym whiche is stronge in conscyence / to ronne in to ieopardy of his helth or of his lyfe. Why do we nat ỹ same / in those thynges wherin is iust and manyfest occasyon of offendyng other men. ❧ There be prelates of ỹ church / which whan they haue yerely rentes and possessyons / so great / that they maye compare in rychesse with any kynges / yet neyther they do teache ỹ people / and besydes that lyueth wickedly / euyn in the open syght of the people / so that ỹ vnlerned men are offended therby. But here in this thynge / we do nothynge regarde the offendyng of their consciences / but rather of the weake psons. We do require so gret symple and strength / that they are cõmaunded to beleue / excepte they had lea-

uer

uer be counted heretykes/that what
so euer thynge is done by them/ ou-
ther whā they lose or bynde/or whā
they blesse or curse / or els whā they
graunt forth pardons or restrayne
them/ is of the same strength / as if
it had be don by the apostel Pauke/
Andrewe or Iames. And yet this
offendynge of the people ryseth of a
thyng/ which of it owne kynde and
nature is so yuel/ that though men
wolde take none occasyon therof to
be offended/ yet ought it to be auoy
ded and eschewed / for as moche as
it offendeth the eyes of god. Besyde
this/though al maner of backbyti-
ge appereth to eche mā for to be vn
lauful / and a great synne: yet in
this thyng we do nat regarde the of
fendyng of weake persons/ but bol
dely and strongly we folowe oure
owne appetyte and affection. ✠ In
these thynges onely whiche are so
lau-

lauful/that who so euer forbyddeth them/ nedeth great defence / leste he myght seme to do clene agaynst the doctryne of the gospel: so moch we do regarde the offendynge of weake persons/that for the folysshe superstition of them/ we wolde haue our brother to stande in ieopardy of his lyfe/rather than to eate certayn metes/ whiche are necessary for him.

Is nat this to transgresse the cõmaundementes of god / for the traditons of men? I knowe right wel moste excellent prelate/ that your holynesse hath sayd a prety whyle ago for what entente are these so many thynges spoken? Is it to disalowe the choise of meates/ whiche the vse and custome of the churche hath alowed/ and yet dothe alowe? ✠ To speke ỹ truthe playnly/as I do thinke: I wolde fayne that al thynges whiche are of this kynde and sorte/

or els at the leest wise/the exaction of
suche thynges were clene rydde out
of the way/ so ỹ what so euer were
abated or taken away from ceremo
nyes/ shulde be added to the exercy-
ses and workes of trewe holynesse.
And so that as moche as the iudai-
cal and superstitious maner of ly-
uyng shulde decreace and be minis-
shed/so moche ỹ trewe christian ma
ner of lyueng myȝt encreace and be
augmented. But if the cõmen sorte
of vnlerned persons can nat vtter-
ly be kepte in doyng their dewty/ wt
out suche maner of ceremonyes/yet
I wolde nat the christian lyberte to
be clogged with very many suche/
I wolde nat the consciences to be so
bounde/that they shulde beleue that
they dyd deedly synne if they dyd ea
te/except it were don of a froward/
a stubburne/ and a disobedient mi-
de. I wolde nat that of an vnreso-
nable

nable iugement and clene out of or
der/those thynges shulde be so gret=
ly regarded / whiche of them selues
are almost of no value. And those
thynges nothing regarded and sette
by/ without the whiche there can be
no good lyueng accordyng to ỹ gos
pel. But these thynges/ seyng that
they be fast rooted by vse & custom:
I wolde nat that they shulde be sedi
ciously dispysed / but outher to be
put downe by lytel and lyel/ or els
to be taken away by the authorite
of the heedes and rulers/ but so ta=
ken away/that in the meane season
the people shuld be called and exhor
ted to better thynges. But here pa=
rauenture some man wyl obiecte &
laye agaynst me/ that suche maner
ceremonys/though they do nat mo=
che good/or be nat greatly profyta=
ble/at the lest wyse they do no hurte/
ye/ and this ferforth dothe helpe to
good

good lyuenge/ that they putte vs in
remembraunce of trewe & inwarde
holynesse/ and are as guydes or lea
ders/to enduce the weake and vnker
ned persones to trewe vertue/ lyke=
wise as the lawe of Moyses was to
the iewes: And we do se/ howe gret
the weakenesse is of christen men al=
so. The eatyng of flesshe forbydden
putteth vs in remembraunce & tea=
cheth/ that al ryote and superfluyte
and what so euer thyng is wonte to
folowe superfluyte/are to be auoy=
ded and eschewed. Fastyng cõmaũ
ded/ putteth vs in remẽbraũce & tea
cheth/ that we ought to abstayn frõ
al vyces & synnes / for that onely is
the fast that is pleasaunt & accepta
ble to god. If this reason doth lyke
and please so greatly/than let vs be
circũcised also/seyng that circumci=
syon bothe doth abate of the delecta
tion & pleasures in gendring/& also

putteth vs in remẽbraunce/that the
herte & mynde is to be circũcised frõ
al grose & carnal affections. Let vs
than also slee beestes & make sacry-
fice of them/for this thig putteth vs
in remẽbraunce/ that the brutysshe &
beestly affectiõs of our myndes/are
to be tamed and subdued. But that
we might be monysshed & put in re-
mẽbraunce by such maner of fygu
res/ it is sufficient for vs that these
thynges were in the olde tyme relyg-
iously obserued of the iewes/for if
trewe holyneesse were nothyng hyn-
dred by ceremonyes / why doth Pau
le so feruẽtly euerywhere fyght a-
gaynst the ceremonyes of the lawe
of Moyses: Of a certayntie / these
thynges if there be to many of them
and vnmesurably vsed / oppresseth
the lyberte of ỹ gospel. To put our
trust & confydẽce in these thiges (as
the most parte of the people dothe)
is the

is the very pestylence & distructyon of trewe holynesse/ for of these thyn ges/ to backbyte thy brother / is the venym & poyson of the relygion of the gospel. * No doute of it/ Paule parceyued these thynges very well/ whan he so fercely kept warre ayēst the lawe of the iewes/ beyng about to breake in or to approch nye to the maners & lyueng of christen men. Ye/ if I had layser / I coulde make you parceyue & vnderstāde / ỹ euery gretteste decay & myscheues of the christen cōmen welth/ hath sprongē out & had their begynnyng of ceremonyes. I do nat alowe ỹ stubbernesse & disobedient myndes of these men/ which openly & scornfully/ as in dispite of the cōmen custom hath eaten flesshe. But so farforth I dis alowe them/ that I do iuge them to be taught/ to be monysshed/ & if nede requyre/ to be rebuked also / but

nat

nat to be accuſed vnto the heed offy-
cers & rulers / as thoughe they were
gyltie of murdrige their owȳ father
or mother. & my iugement is / ỹ this
mater is rather to be diſpiſed & ma-
de lyght of / than to be greuouſly hā
dled. At the leſt wyſe for this cauſe /
leſt of this ſparke kyndled a gretter
fyre might growe / & more hatered a
gaynſt the clergy / whiche is to gret /
and ouer moche alredy. It doth diſ
pleaſe me / what ſo euer thyng ptay
neth to ſedition & ſtryfe. But yet if
no man ſhulde reſyſt & withſtāde ſu
che maner ceremonyes alwayes in-
creacyng & waxing more & more / ỹ
lyberte of the goſpel ſhulde be diſtro
yed for euer / but there is no man to
whom it is more cōuenyent to with
ſtande them / than the heedes and ru
lers of the church. So crope in by ly
tel & lytel ỹ cuſtom / which hath ma
de ỹ friday a fyſſh day. Afterwarde
whan

whan this was wel comen to passe
saterday also was taken from vs/
and nowe wednisday also is ī great
ieopardy. And for such maner cere-
monys we se so many men to be so
re afflycte to be in ieopdy/ ye synal-
ly to dye: & we se many men to stā-
de folysshly in their owne concepte/
and to thynke them selues trewe cri
sten men/ whan they are in dede ve-
ry iewes/ and for the trust & confy-
dence which they haue in these thyn
ges/ to regarde no whyt those thyn-
ges whiche belongeth to trewe holy
nesse & vertuous lyueng/ but ỹ cha
rite of the gospel teacheth vs/ to so-
cour & helpe those whiche are in af-
flyction. The lyberte of the gospel/
ought nat wt suche thīges brought
in out of mesure/ to be called away
from more earnest & sadde studyes/
and exercises or pastymes. ✠ And
thus farforth be it spoken general-
ly of

ly of ſuche maner thynges / nat by-
cauſe I wolde defende thoſe preſūp
tuous & diſobedyent perſons / but ȳ
your wyſedom / after that the circū-
ſtaunces of the cauſe be examyned
and diſcuſſed / might prouyde & loke
aboute / that neyther more nor leſſe
were done / than the thyng it ſelfe re
quireth.

NOwe wyl I plede myn owne cauſe ī fewe wordes / nat
bycauſe I haue gyuen occaſyon to
any good man for to be offēded / for
that whiche I dyd / I wolde nat ha-
ue ben afrayde to haue done it / if
Chriſt hym ſelfe had ſytten at ȳ ſa-
me table with me. For I was ī that
ſtate / that any man wolde haue iu-
ged me more worthy to be piteed thā
to be rebuked. But that nat withſtā
dyng / I wyl nat ſuffre that amōge
thoſe which knoweth nat the mater
as it

as it is in very dede/ any man myȝt cloke his owne boldnesse by myne eyample/ or by my necessyte defēde his owne vndyscrete presumption.

¶ Fyrst I dyd nat coūsayle or exhorte any man to eate flesshe without necessytie/ but rather I taught, that the cōmen custom is to be folowed and obserued. I my selfe haue suche affection towarde flesshe/ ȳ if I myght mayntayn & saue my lyfe with pees & fetches/ I wolde neither desyre flesshe ne fysshe. Moreouer natwithstandyng/ ȳ I am wont almost eche lent to be in great ieopdy/ by the reason of weaknesse & sicklynesse of my body/ and of a certayne natural hatered that I haue towardes fysshe. In so moche that ȳ physycions haue oftentymes called on me/ and counsayled me to helpe my selfe by eatyng flesshe. yet I dyd neuer folowe their coūsayle/ but ones

in

in Italye (whan the phisycion had thretned me thā certayn dayes / that there was none other way with me but dethe / vnlesse I wolde folowe his counsayle. And yet for al that / I dyd after his coūsayle but a fewe dayes onely / and thus farforth that I dyd eate the brothe of flesshe tempred with the yolkes of egges / abstaynyng from the flesshe selfe / whiche although my minde had desyred yet my stomake wolde nat haue receyued / so weake and feble it was at that tyme: & nowe a fewe dayes in this lent / and that by the cōmaūdement of the phisycion / & nat without lycence and pardone of ỹ pope / whose bulles I haue hadde redy to shewe these certayn peres / yet dyd I neuer vse them afore nowe / as concernynge the eatynge of flesshe. Admytte that I dyd this without ỹ phisycions authorite. What phisycion

cion knoweth better this my weake body than my selfe? But the case put that I had done it without any pardon or lycence: Doth nat necessyte excuse better than any pdone?

Fyrst cõsyder myne age/ ỹ weaknesse & crachynesse of my body almost cõtynual: consyder ỹ labour and traueyle of iournayeng/the labours i studyeng/ wherin I am busyed contynually aboue the strẽgth of bothe my body & mynde. Moreouer/the murre & flixe/ nay rather a very pestylẽce payned & beyed me almost. yy. dayes. The same hauyng recourse after a certayn space betwene/helde me bothe longer and more greuously. Besydes this/ a lytel before lent/ ỹ stone toke me with a marueylous payne & turmẽtyng of al my body. * This disease though it be most sharpe & cruel & most redy paryl & ieopardy is in it of al

diſeaſes (for women are nat in mo re ieopardy of lyfe whan they tra ueyle of chylde) yet almoſt euery ſe conde day it had recourſe to me/ ſo that with a wretched and a paynful frutefulneſſe/ I dyd cõcepue in one day/ and traueyled the neyxte day/ & in the thirde was delyuered. What wiſe man wolde nat ſay that I had ben a murdrer of myne owne ſelfe/ if I had abſtayned from fleſſhe be yng in that caſe: He ỹ wyl folowe Eraſmus / lette him folowe him in euery poynt and he ſhal nat be bla med. ✻ Nowe what parteyneth the example of Eraſmus to them whi che are ſtronge & in good helth/ whi che ar ydel/ which are drõken/ which eateth in diſpyte or for a ſcorne/ nat for any neceſſyte. ✻ Nowe there re mayneth one doute/ as concernyng the offendyng of weake perſons. I do nat deny but that chriſtian charyte cõ-

tie counsayleth / in euery thynge as moche as maye be / to prouyde that weake persons haue none occasyon gyuen to them wherfore they might be offended. Here Paule redy to abstayne from the eatyng of flesshe al his lyfe long / rather than that he wolde offende his neyghboure with his eatyng. But the same Paule / as we haue sayd before: doth chyde and rebuke those which iugeth their brother for meate or drinke. And in the meane season he reckeneth them to be most pestylent / whiche dyd forbydde to eate the meates whiche god hath ordayned to the vse of man. *

* Why dooste thou (sayth he) iuge another mānes seruaunt? he standeth or falleth to his lorde or master and wherfore am I iuged of anomannes conseyence in that thynge / for the which I gyue thākes to god? He that eateth / lette him nat dispyse him

him that doth nat eate: And he that eateth nat/let him nat iuge that parsone which eateth. After the mynde than a iugement of Pauke/he is the weaker person of ÿ two which doth nat eate. And he synneth more greuously which iugeth one that is better than him self/ & to whō he ought rather to haue gyue place. And yet charite/whiche attēpreth & applyeth her selfe to al men/ gyueth place for a season to the weakenesse of this psone/if he be offended of any probable or lykly cause/ & if he can nat be amended: but nat vtterly in euery thynge/ & at al tymes. For there is some thyng/ wherin the weake person is to be monysshed and taught. Ther is/ wherin he is to be rebuked or repreued. There is also/ wherin he is to be dispysed/ for els by contynual applyeng to their myndes/ to do nothyng els/but norisshe the disease

ease & sickenesse of weake psons in
conscyẽce / is the straighteſt & nexte
way / to distroy al Euãgelycal holy
nesse. And yet Paule speketh of in-
syrmyte & weaknesse / whiche was
weknere inuyncible / which by ỹ rea
son that they had receyued it of their
elders & aunceſters / & also of longe
vsage & custome / was so depely so-
ken & setled in the myndes of men /
that it coulde nat sodaynly be pluc-
ked out agayn / for so the iewes coul
de nat suffre the lawe to be abrogat
and disanulled / in whiche they were
born & brought vp / & had cõtynued
in the relygious obseruation therof
to their olde age. So some man of
the gentyls / if he shulde haue sene a
christen man syttyng at the table a-
mong cõpany / where was set afore
them flesshe / whiche had ben offred
to ydols / he coulde nat but suspecte /
that that christen man dothe cõsente
to the

to the ſupſtition of thē/ with whom he kepte cōpany at meale. And yet for al that/ Paule cryeth out ſtoutly & boldly in the meane ſeaſon that an ydole is nothing/ & that it is lawful to eate what ſo euer thyng is ſolde in the ſhambles. He cryeth/ that the ceremonyes of the lawe/ whiche were ordayned for a ſeaſon/ ought to be abolesſhed & put away/ whan the goſpel ſhulde take place & be of ſtrength. And to make an ende/ he withſtode Peter/ & rebuked hym to his face/ bycauſe he was nat yet bolde to ſet lyght by the vayn offēdyng of the iewes. Therfore it was another kynde & maner of offendyng ỹ neighbour/ wherof Paule dyd ſpeke/ the occaſyon wherof roſe by reaſon of a rooted cuſtom/ whiche they had vſed in their lyfe afore ledde. ✠ But we gendre & ſeche dayly to our ſelues/ newe mater & occaſyons to be of-

be offẽded after this maner & facion though we do se & parceyue wel ynough / howe great hurte & hynderaunce of trewe holynesse hath growen therof to ỹ lyfe of men. Paule suffreth the weake psons / but vpon this hope: that they wolde profyte & growe vp to fyrmyte & strength of cõscience. We do enclyne & leane altogider to ceremonys / hauynge no mynde or regarde of those thynges / whiche alone dothe make vs trewly vertuous & good lyuers. ✠ But to returne agayn to myne owne cause howe so euer the mater standeth / as concernyng the auoydyng of offendynge our neighbour / neither ī this thynge shal any man thynke (as I trowe) that there lacketh in me charite / couetyng to gyue place to ỹ infyrmyte & weaknesse of my neyghbour. ✠ I had ordayned the popes pardon / as a preseruatyue agaynst

suche

ſuche maner offences / for I do nat
ſe for what other vſe it is good or p
fytable to me. Furthermore / as mo
che as I might / I dyd eate ſleſſhe ſe
cretely. ye: moreouer I dyd vtterly
abſtayn from fleſſhe / euyn to ỹ ma
nyfeſt & open ieopardy of my lyfe /
oftetymes diſobeyng the counſayls
of phiſcycions. What can I do mo=
re excepte that I ſhulde dye (for to
auoyde the ſuperſtitious weakneſſe
I wyl nat ſay the puerſe malyce of
certayne perſones / whiche fyndeth
fautes with euery thynge) I ſhulde
alſo dye. He ſhulde be an vnchary=
table man (I trowe) whiche wolde
requyre this thynge of me / & I my
ſelfe ſhulde be a manquellet / if I
wolde do accordyng to his requeſt.

* It belongeth to the charite of a
chriſten man / to interprete and iuge
euery thyng to ỹ beſt / what ſo euer
maye be done with a good mynde &

pur=

purpose. And those which be lerned in the christen faithe/ ought to haue knowen that fastynge & eatynge of fysshe/ was nat cõmaũded & apoynted for thẽ which are in ieopdy by ỹ reason of sickenesse/ but to such whiche are in ieopdy by reason of rãckenesse & wantõnesse of ỹ flesssh. But if any man yet be very supstitious/ if he that eateth flesshe/ do monysshand coũsayle him by these wordes.

* Brother/ let nat myne exãple any thing offende you/ I am cõstrayned to do ỹ I do/ wolde god I were more helthy: I am glad of yo' strẽgth & helth/ do nat you wrongfully accuse my feblenesse & weakenesse. He hath sufficiẽtly (as I wene) discharged his own cõsciẽce: but nowe to make an ende. In lyke maner as I do iuge thẽ worthy to be sharpely rebuked/ whiche of a sedytious presũption & boldnesse/ dothe violate &

breake the cõmen custome / namely
suche a custome which is nat cõtra-
ry to trewe holynesse & gode lyueng
So me semeth ỹ the curates & prea
chers shulde do very wel / if by ỹ au
thorite of the bysshops / they dyd de-
nouce fastyng to the people / in this
wyse. Verely the hole lyfe of chry-
sten men ought by cõtynual sober-
nesse to be a certayn fast / nat onely
from meates / but moch more from
al maner riote / & from al pleasures
of this worlde / frõ carnal affectiõs
or despres of the flesh / whiche war-
reth alwayes agaynst the spyrite.
But yet neuertheles / the authorite
of ỹ church / & the custom of our el-
ders & forefathers / exhorteth & cal-
leth vpon vs / that such as may for
strength of body / for lauful age / &
plenty of substaunce / shulde prepare
their myndes with fastyng to ỹ ho-
ly day. But let your fast be such as
beco-

becometh christen men / if you wyl
that it be acceptable & pleſaũt to Je-
ſu Chriſt: let it be an hole & parfyte
faſt. It is the leſt parte of faſtyng/
the abſtynẽce of certayn meates: it
is an vnpleſaunt faſt to god/ wher-
by peace & cõcorde is brokẽ. They
that do faſt/ let thẽ gyue thanꝭes to
god for ỹ ſtrẽgth of their body/ whi
che by abſtynẽce & faſtyng/is made
more apte & mete to godly thynges.
And they whiche do nat faſt/ let thẽ
gyue thãkes to the lorde / whiche of
his lyberalyte & goodneſſe/doth my
nyſter dyuers plenty of meates / to
nouſſhe & cõforte our weake & feble
bodyes with al. They that faſteth/
let them nat ſtande therfore in their
owne cõcepte/ as though they dyd a
gret & an expellẽt thing/ excepte they
put to greatter and better thynges.
They whiche faſteth nat/ lette them
ſo moche the more endeuer by godly
exer-

exercyses & workes / that they maye make recõpence & amendes for that thyng / whiche the weakneſſe of body wyl nat ſuffre thẽ to do. He that doth nat abſtayn / let him nat trouble the cõmen cuſtome / & let him auoyde the offendyng of weake perſons / as moche as he may cõueniently. He that dothe abſtayne / lette him beware ỹ he iuge nat his neighbour (agaynſt the doctryne both of Chriſt & the apoſtels) of ſuch thynges whiche of their owyn nature are indifferent / & maye be done outher wel or yuel. He doth leſſe ſynne whiche ſuppeth al his lyfe without anynede / than he which for meate or drĩke ſclaundreth & backbyteth his neyghbour / whom accordyng to the cõmaũdement of god / he ought to loue as wel as his owne ſelfe. Suche maner monytions & counſayls / by cauſe they helpe greatly to the purpoſe /

pose / are oftētymes among to be re herſed to the people. Moreouer this thig alſo / I wolde fayn to be playnly declared & ſhewed, for the weake and frayful conſciences ſakes / whi che cōſtitutyons bynde / and whom they bynde: and whom they bynde nat: & howe farforth they bynde / or nat bynde. Neither I do thynke in my mynde / that ſo narowe boūdes or meares are to be ſette & marked out / in theſe thynges which may be releaſed of man / let theſe be gentyl and fauourable fatherly charitie.

But agaynſt enuy / againſt backbytyng / agaynſt manſlaughter / & agaynſt warres / and ſuch other vndouted & very peſtylences and poyſons of the chriſtyan holyneſſe: let the authorite of ỹ byſſhops be ſharpe and cruel. * Theſe thynges I thought beſt to write to you mooſt worſhypful man & moſt vertuous pre-

prelate/nat that I wolde teache you whiche are most lerned/or plede my cause: and defende my selfe before youre hyghnesse/ whiche knoweth bothe my labours in studies/ which I haue taken for the cõmen profytes sake/ & also this my mynde/ whiche despyreth nothyng lesse thã meate or drinke/ and the weaknesse of my body which is encreased by olde age and this presente disease whiche cleueth to me and vexeth me to to moche: But that by you I myght outher pacifye or heale other men/ if my dede happely hath offended any men/ or myne exãple hath drawen any to ouermoche lybertie or boldenesse. And that these thynges somwhat largely hath ben dysputed of me: there was none other cause els/ But onely that I had very good opinyon of your synguler wysedome/ and gentylnesse or pacience. * For

whan

whan I dyd consyder & cal to my re
membraũce/ the noblenesse of your
kynred/ your most pure and incor-
rupte maners & excellent lernynge/
synally your synguler wysedome/
and other gyftes & vertues / semely
for a byssshop/ I dyd nat feare/ leste
you wolde take any thyng in to sus
pytion/ whiche were spoken sõwhat
boldly & largely/ of the offyce & dew
tie of byssshoppes. I pray god that
wel might your highnesse fare/
most holy and vertu-
ous prelate.
At Basyle on Eester monday/
The yere our lorde god.
M. CCCCC.
yy. ii.

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regali.